5
TOKYO TARAREBA GIRLS
AKIKO HIGASHIMURA

Tokyo TARAREBA GIRLS

5

AKIKO HIGASHIMURA

TODAY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

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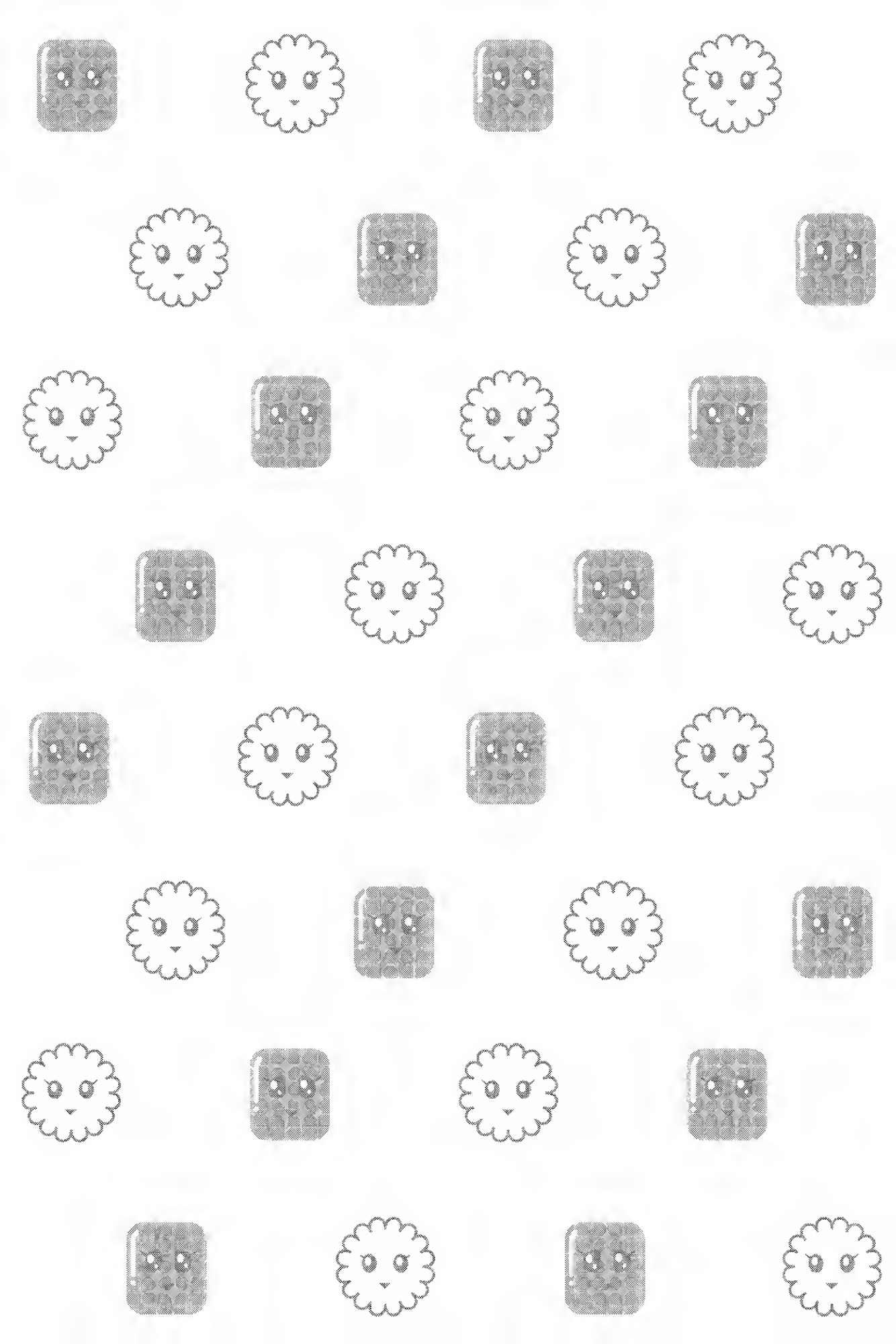
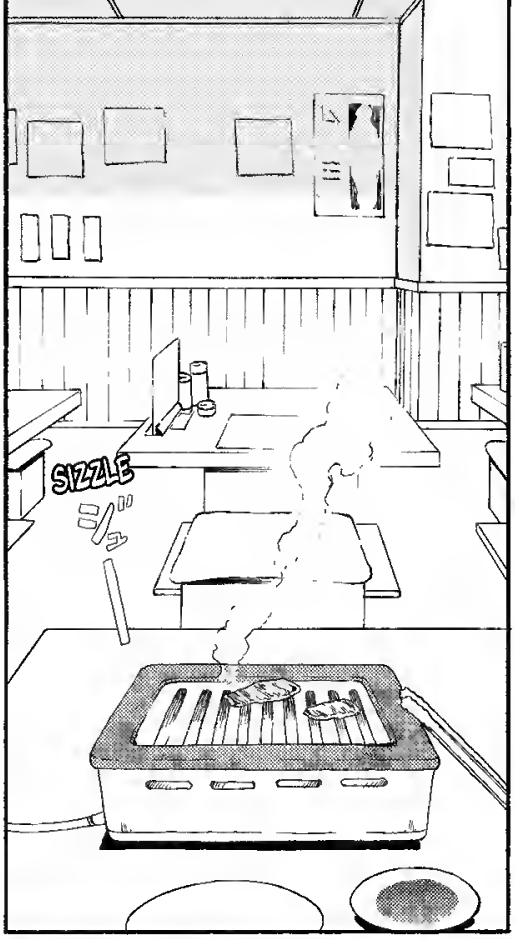
ACT 16
MUDDY WOMEN



I COULD NEVER LOVE YOU.
I COULD NEVER LOVE A WOMAN LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE NOT YOUNG AND YOU'RE NOT A "GOOD WOMAN"!
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
WHAT IF, WHAT IF THAT MEANS YOU'RE NOT "GOOD WOMAN" ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM WANT TO LOVE YOU?
THAT'S RIGHT! WHAT IF! WHAT IF! 33 YEAR OLDS WHO SPEND ALL THEIR TIME AT GIRLS' NIGHTS OUT AREN'T "GOOD WOMEN"! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!

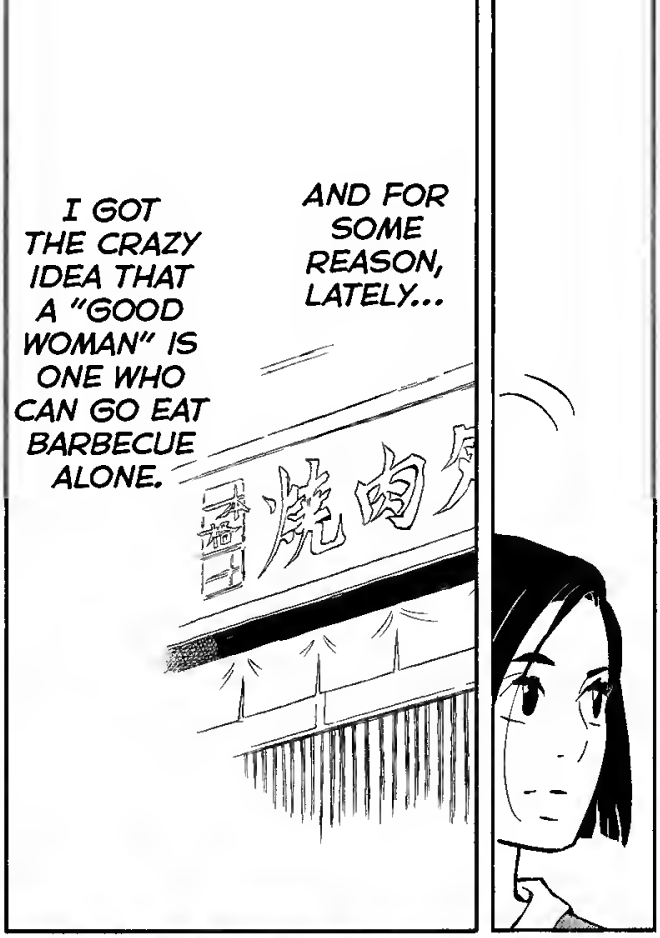
*Komatsuna: a vegetable also known as Japanese mustard spinach, eaten in a variety of dishes.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I THOUGHT A "GOOD WOMAN" WAS A SEXY WOMAN.
THEN, AS I GOT OLDER, I STARTED THINKING THAT INTELLIGENT WOMEN WERE "GOOD WOMEN."



I GOT THE CRAZY IDEA THAT A "GOOD WOMAN" IS ONE WHO CAN GO EAT BARBECUE ALONE.

AND FOR SOME REASON, LATELY...



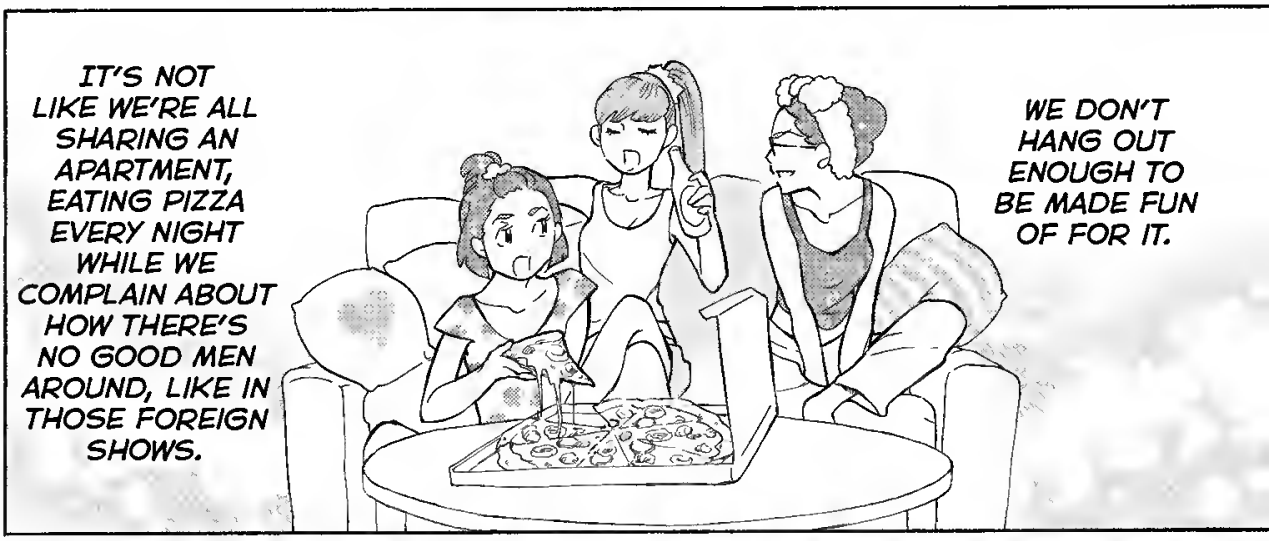
EVEN AT YOUR AGE, YOU'RE STILL GETTING TOGETHER JUST GIRLS, MAKING A BUNCH OF NOISE...

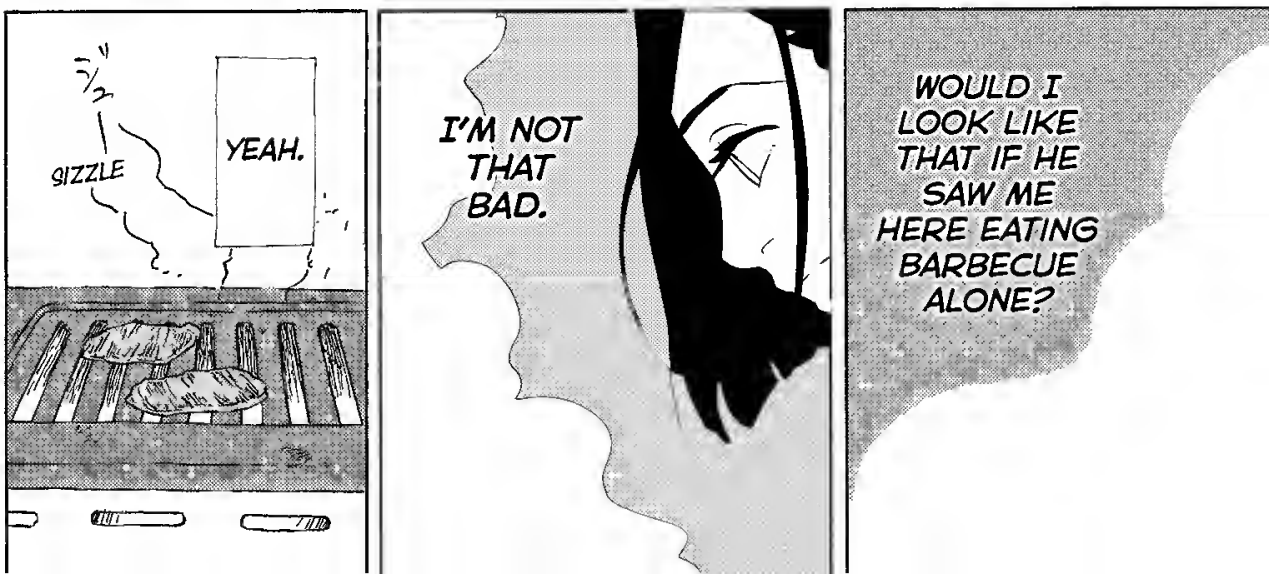
SO I'M ON ALERT TOO.

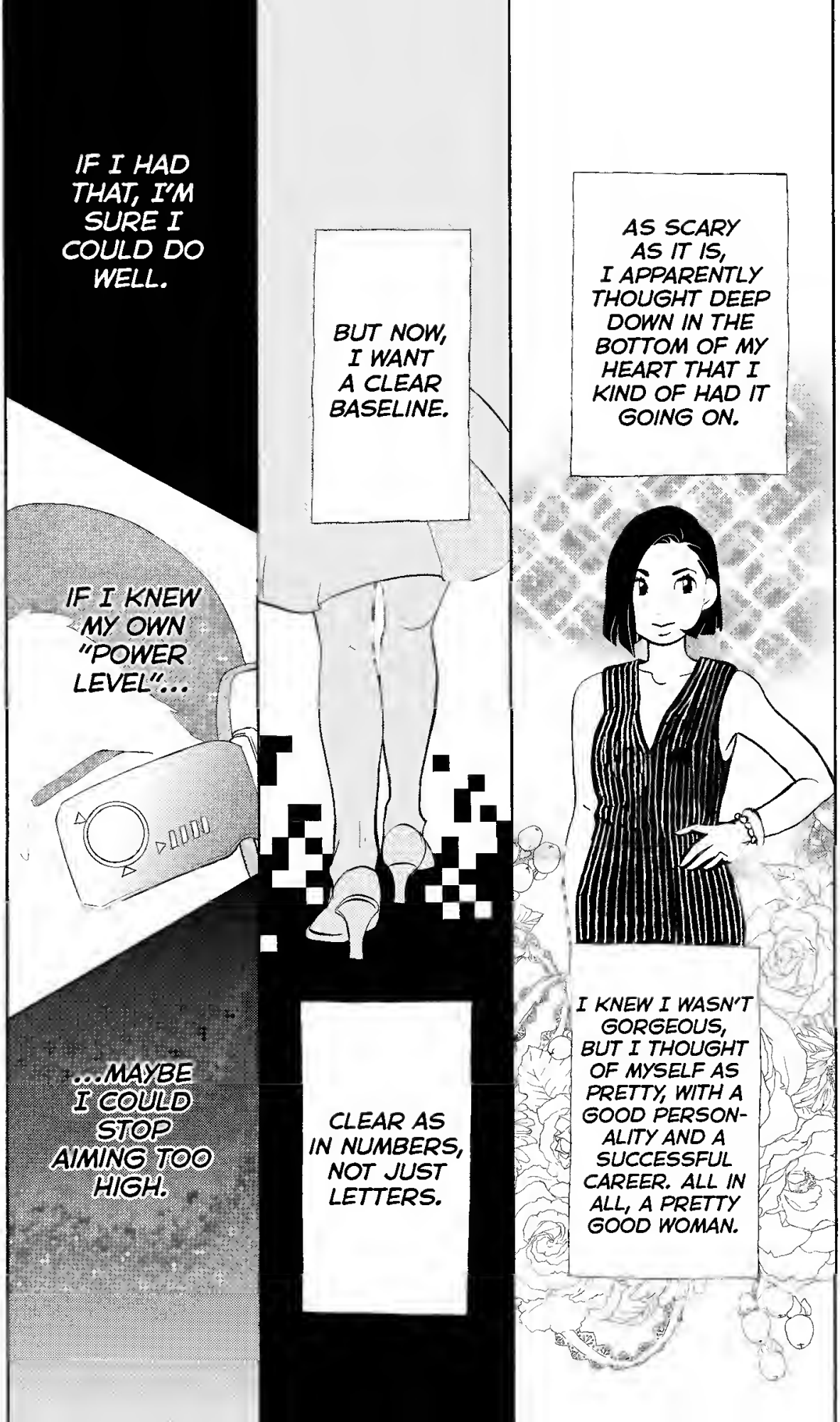
YOU WOMEN ARE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.

I COULD NEVER LOVE YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING OLDER FOR?
SIZZLE
SIGH ...
AHHH!
!
MA'AM, IT'S BURNING!
GASP
PUFF
PUFF

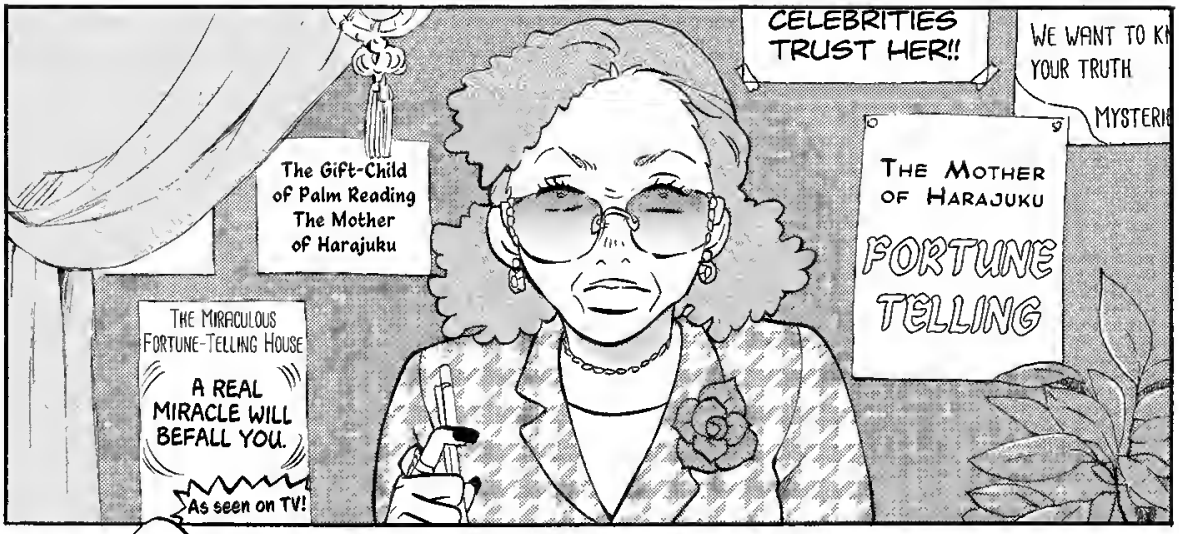
AND EVEN WITH OUR GIRLS' NIGHTS OUT, WE ONLY HAVE THEM ONCE A WEEK —ONCE EVERY FEW DAYS, AT MOST.
WE ALL WORK OUR BUTTS OFF AT OUR OWN JOBS EVERY DAY.
WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN PLACES.
SO WHAT IF WE STILL HANG OUT?
IT'S JUST THAT A LOT'S HAPPENED RECENTLY, SO WE'VE HAD A FEW MORE THAN USUAL.
上ミノ
ハツ
450
450
和牛ホルモン
780
上ロース
1000
600

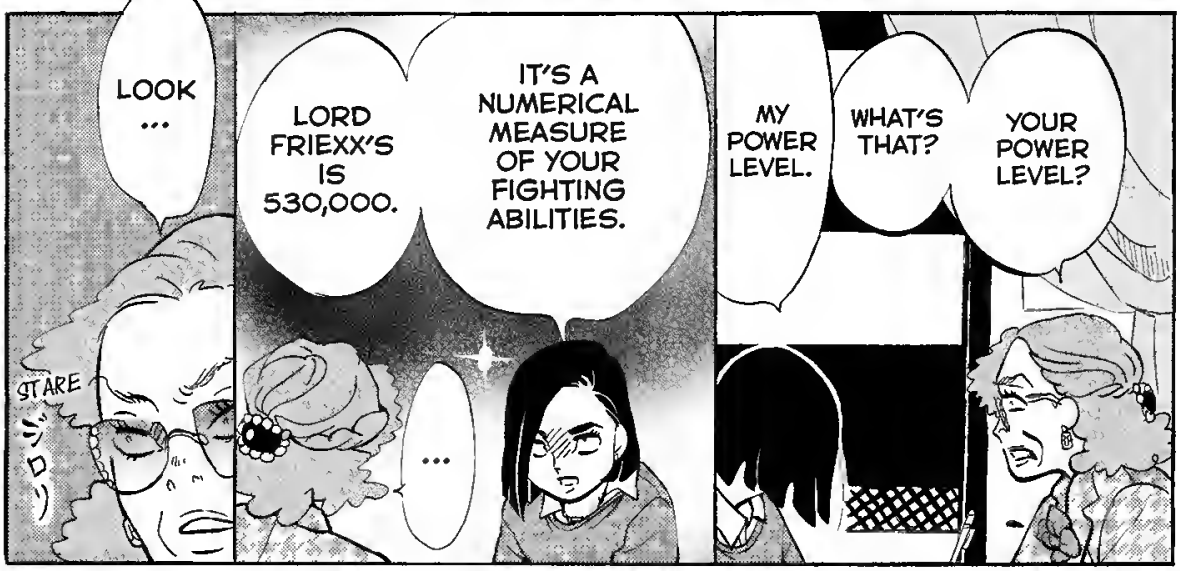

IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE ALL SHARING AN APARTMENT, EATING PIZZA EVERY NIGHT WHILE WE COMPLAIN ABOUT HOW THERE'S NO GOOD MEN AROUND, LIKE IN THOSE FOREIGN SHOWS.
WE DON'T HANG OUT ENOUGH TO BE MADE FUN OF FOR IT.


SIZZLE
YEAH.
I'M NOT THAT BAD.
WOULD I LOOK LIKE THAT IF HE SAW ME HERE EATING BARBECUE ALONE?


AS SCARY AS IT IS, I APPARENTLY THOUGHT DEEP DOWN IN THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART THAT I KIND OF HAD IT GOING ON.
I KNEW I WASN'T GORGEOUS, BUT I THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS PRETTY, WITH A GOOD PERSONALITY AND A SUCCESSFUL CAREER. ALL IN ALL, A PRETTY GOOD WOMAN.
BUT NOW, I WANT A CLEAR BASELINE.
CLEAR AS IN NUMBERS, NOT JUST LETTERS.
IF I KNEW MY OWN "POWER LEVEL"...
...MAYBE I COULD STOP AIMING TOO HIGH.
IF I HAD THAT, I'M SURE I COULD DO WELL.

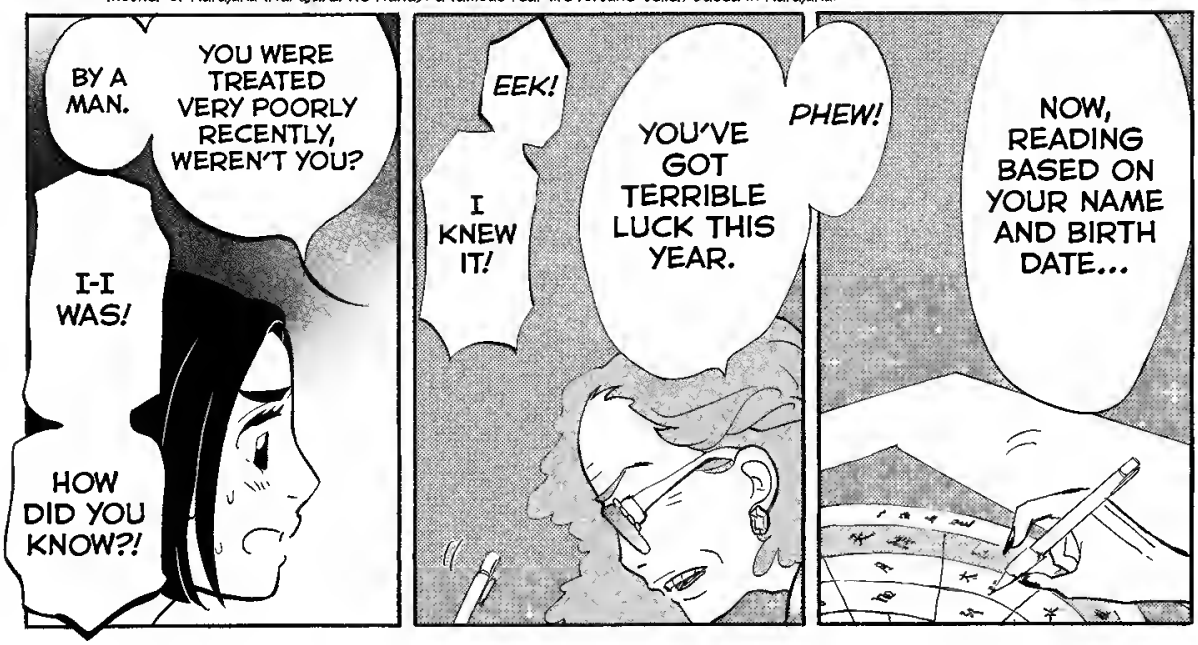
PLEASE TELL ME MY POWER LEVEL...


CELEBRITIES TRUST HER!!
WE WANT TO KN
YOUR TRUTH
MYSTERI
The Gift-Child of Palm Reading The Mother of Harajuku
THE MOTHER OF HARAJUKU
FORTUNE TELLING
THE MIRACULOUS FORTUNE-TELLING HOUSE
A REAL MIRACLE WILL BEFALL YOU.
As seen on TV!

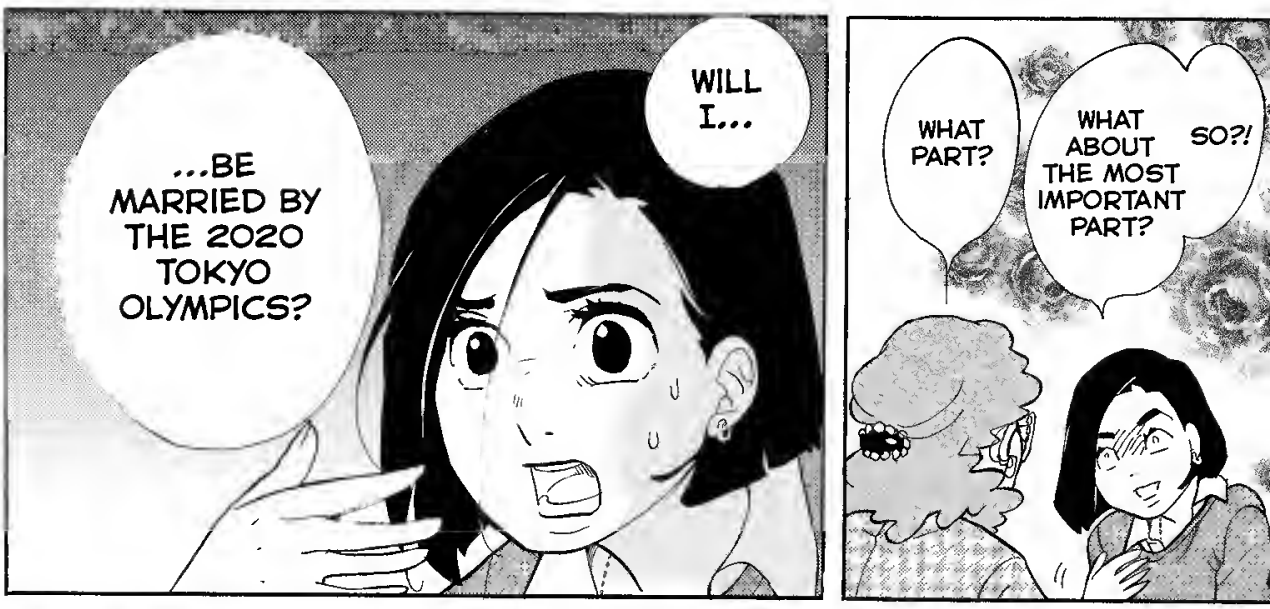

LOOK ...
STARE ジロリ
LORD FRIEXX'S IS 530,000.
IT'S A NUMERICAL MEASURE OF YOUR FIGHTING ABILITIES.
...
MY POWER LEVEL.
WHAT'S THAT?
YOUR POWER LEVEL?

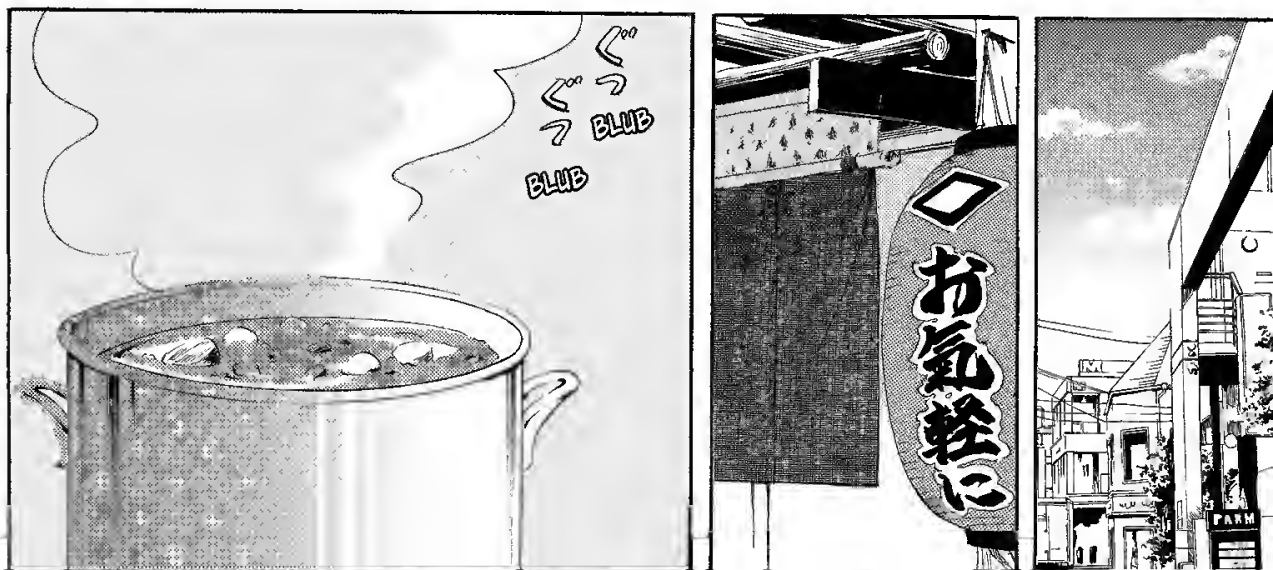
...
THAT YOUNG. I'M 33...
REALLY ...
I'M NOT...
YOU'RE PRETTY TIRED-LOOKING FOR SOME-ONE SO YOUNG...
WELL, LET'S GET RIGHT DOWN TO BUSI-NESS!
THEY DON'T CALL YOU THE MOTHER OF HARA-JUKU* FOR NOTH-ING!!
EEK!
YOU'RE PANICKING BECAUSE YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED BUT CAN'T.
H-HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
YOU'RE DEPRESSED BECAUSE A MAN REJECTED YOU?
SO?
YOU'RE PRETTY YOUNG COMPARED TO ME.
HUH ?!

*Mother of Harajuku (*Harajuku no Haha*): a famous real-life fortune-teller, based in Harajuku.


BY A MAN.
YOU WERE TREATED VERY POORLY RECENTLY, WEREN'T YOU?
I-I WAS!
HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
EEK!
I KNEW IT!
YOU'VE GOT TERRIBLE LUCK THIS YEAR.
PHEW!
NOW, READING BASED ON YOUR NAME AND BIRTH DATE...

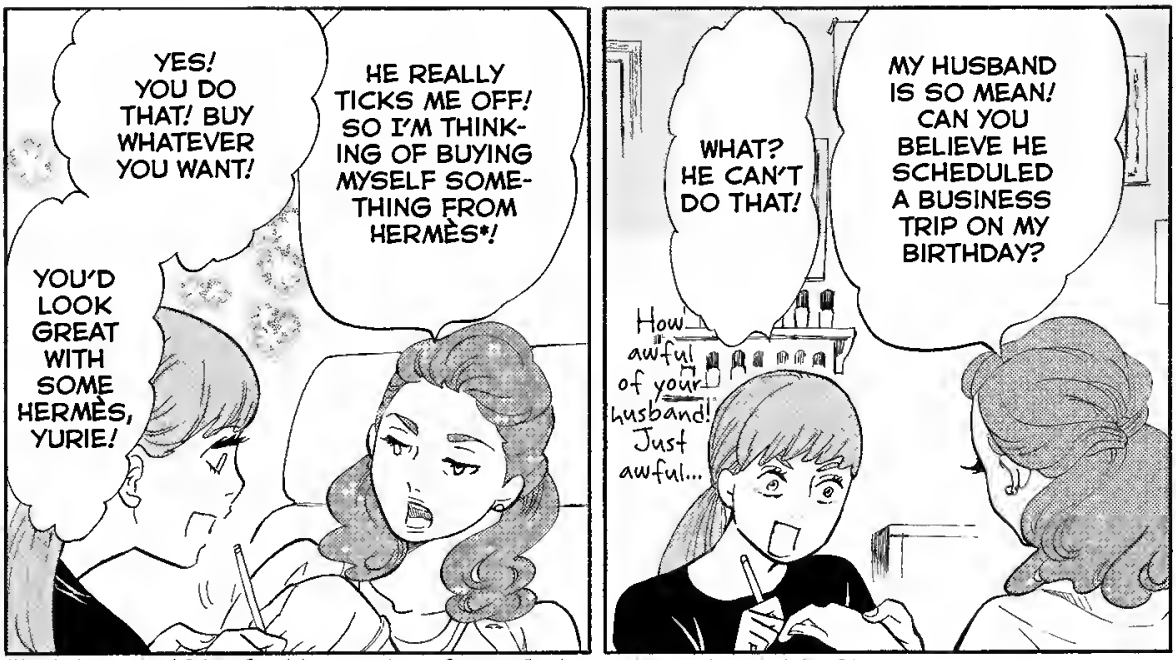
HEY, HOW LONG DO YOU THINK I'VE BEEN TELLING FORTUNES HERE ANYWAY?
OH! YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU ARE THE MOTHER OF HARAJUKU, AFTER ALL!
HUUUH ?! HOW CAN YOU TELL ALL THAT?!
YOU'RE SCARING ME!!
YOUR CAREER BOTTOMED OUT FOR A MOMENT, BUT THEN THINGS TOOK A SLIGHT TURN FOR THE BETTER, DIDN'T IT?
OH!
THE POSITION OF THE STARS, NATURALLY. SEE HOW VENUS AND JUPITER ARE CROSSING?
I GET IT!


WILL I...
...BE MARRIED BY THE 2020 TOKYO OLYMPICS?
WHAT PART?
WHAT ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART?
SO?!


ぐつぐつ
BLUB
BLUB
お気軽に
FARM

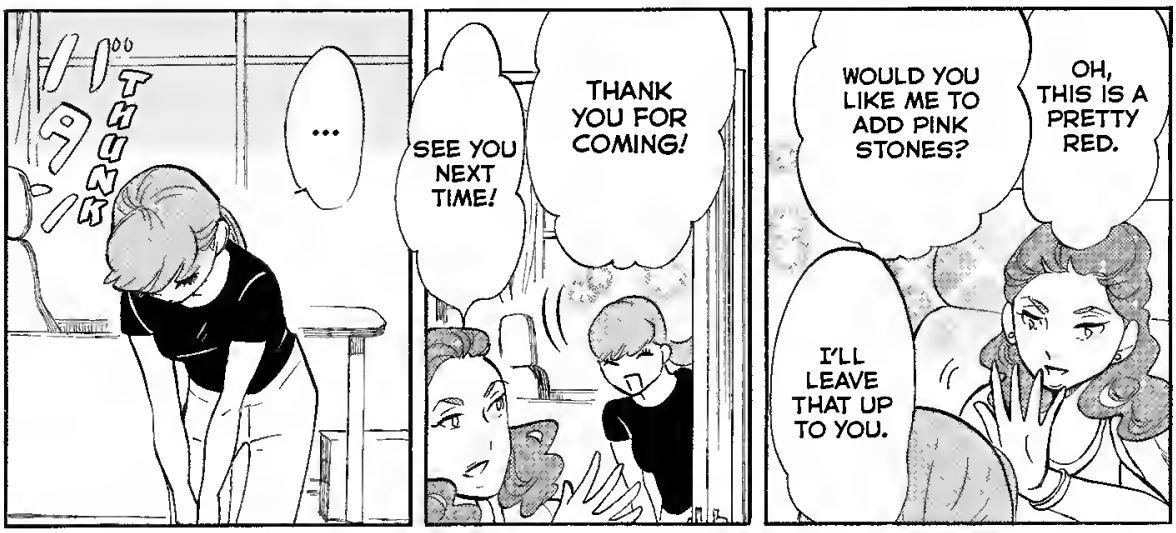
THERE'S NOT MUCH TO DO WHILE YOU'RE BOILING A DISH...
BLUB
ぐつ
ぐつ
BLUB
PHEW ...
BLUB
BLUB
ぐつ
ぐつ
CLICK
カ
チ
face book
ORINO MARUI
CLACK
CLACK
カタカタ
facebook
PROFI
NEW

CRIB'S READY NOW TOO!
CLICK
CLICK
ONLY ONE MONTH UNTIL THE DUE D
DAYS AGO
LIKE! / COMMENT
PEOPLE LIKE THIS PHOTO
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
Nail Salon
SHEESH!
THAT MAN DRIVES ME CRAZY!

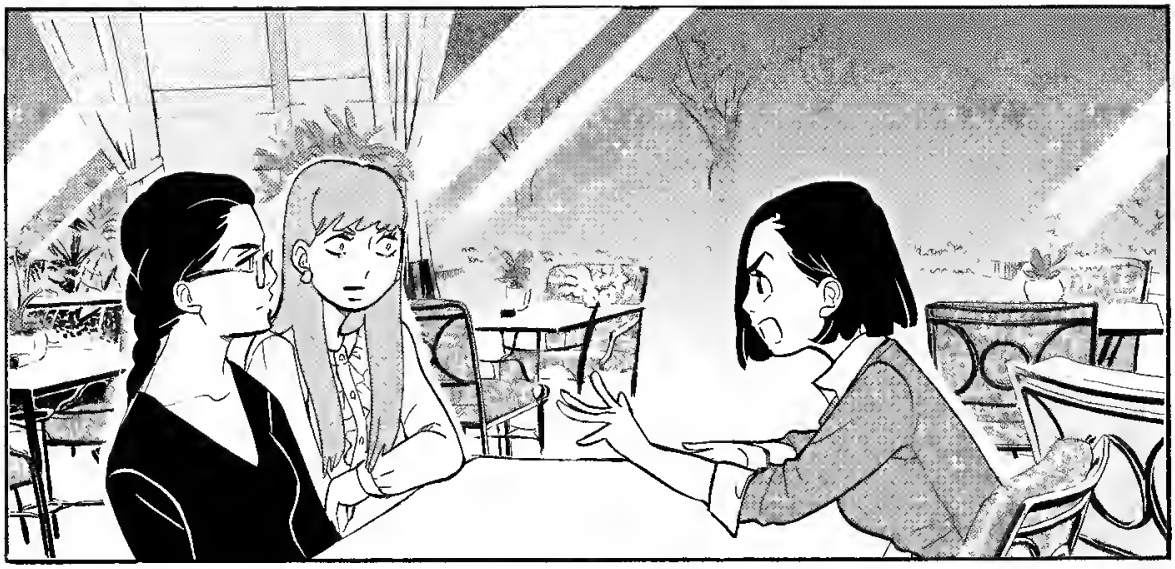

YES! YOU DO THAT! BUY WHATEVER YOU WANT!
HE REALLY TICKS ME OFF! SO I'M THINKING OF BUYING MYSELF SOMETHING FROM HERMÈS*!
YOU'D LOOK GREAT WITH SOME HERMÈS, YURIE!
WHAT? HE CAN'T DO THAT!
MY HUSBAND IS SO MEAN! CAN YOU BELIEVE HE SCHEDULED A BUSINESS TRIP ON MY BIRTHDAY?
How awful of your husband! Just awful...

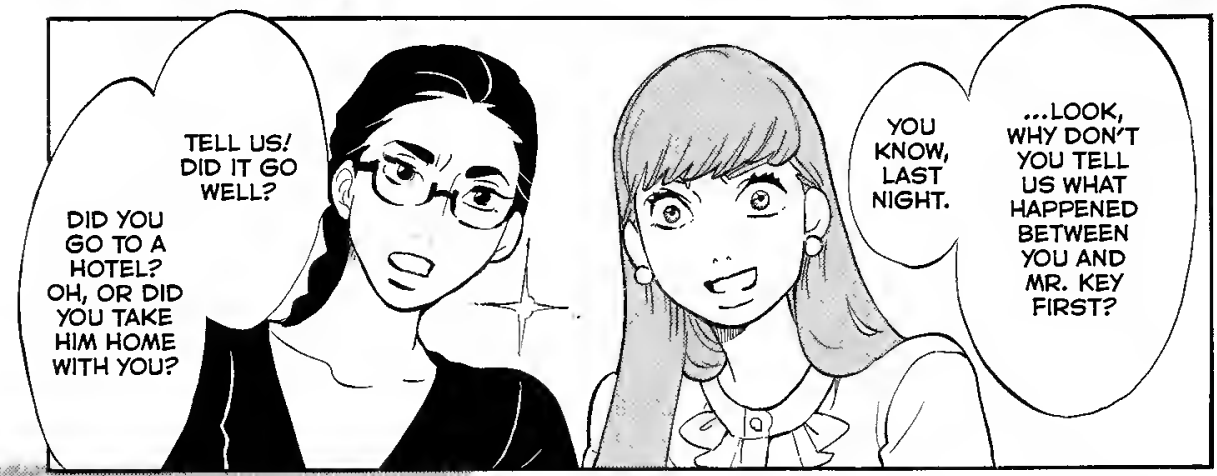
*Hermès International S.A.: a French luxury goods manufacturer. They have boutiques in Japan, including Tokyo.

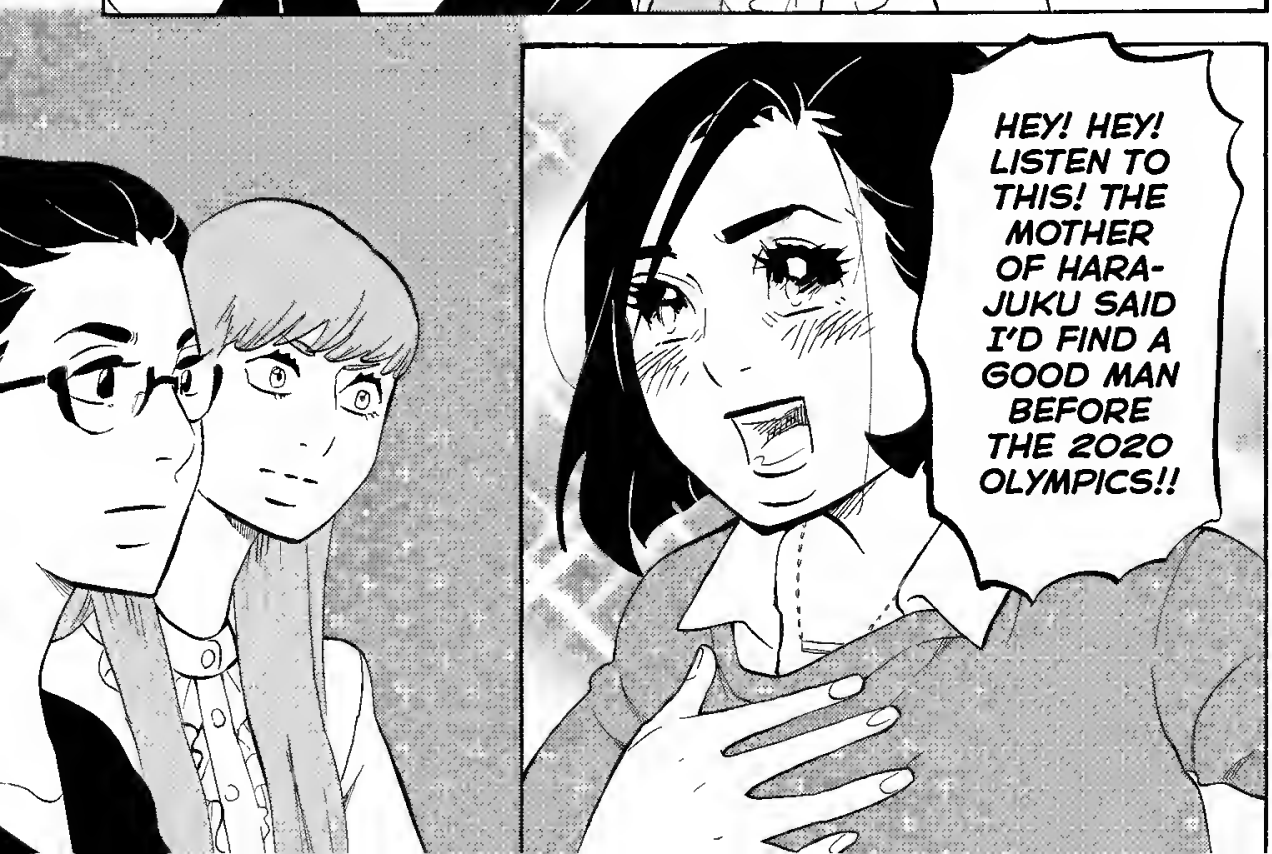
BUT WE'VE ONLY BEEN MARRIED SEVEN YEARS AND IT'S ALREADY DOWN TO THIS!
MY BIRTHDAY IS RIGHT ON CHRISTMAS, SO I AGREED TO MARRY HIM ON THE CONDITION THAT EVERY YEAR WE STAY AT THE WESTIN TO CELEBRATE!
I KNOW! WHY ELSE AM I DOING ALL THESE CHORES EVERY DAY EXCEPT TO GET MY HUSBAND TO BUY ME SOMETHING ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS?

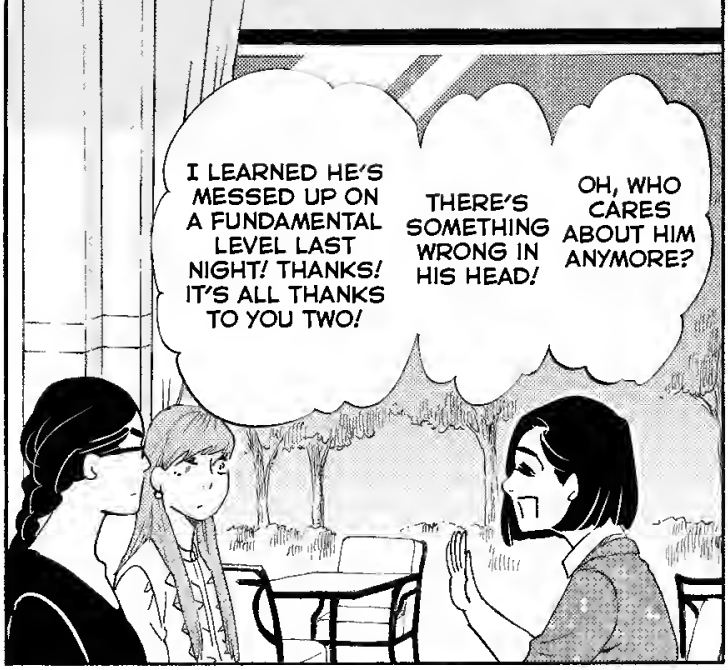

THUNK
...
SEE YOU NEXT TIME!
THANK YOU FOR COMING!
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO ADD PINK STONES?
OH, THIS IS A PRETTY RED.
I'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU.

You busy tonight?
JING-A-LING
I WANNA GET MARRIED!!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT FANCY BAGS OR THE WESTIN!! I JUST WANNA GET MARRIED!!
YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY TO HAVE EVEN MARRIED AN ELITE TRADER!!
RARGH!
LISTEN!! I'M TELLIN' YOU, THIS LADY WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY!!
LET'S GO!! RIGHT NOW!!
LET'S GET HER TO TELL YOUR FOR-TUNES TOO!!

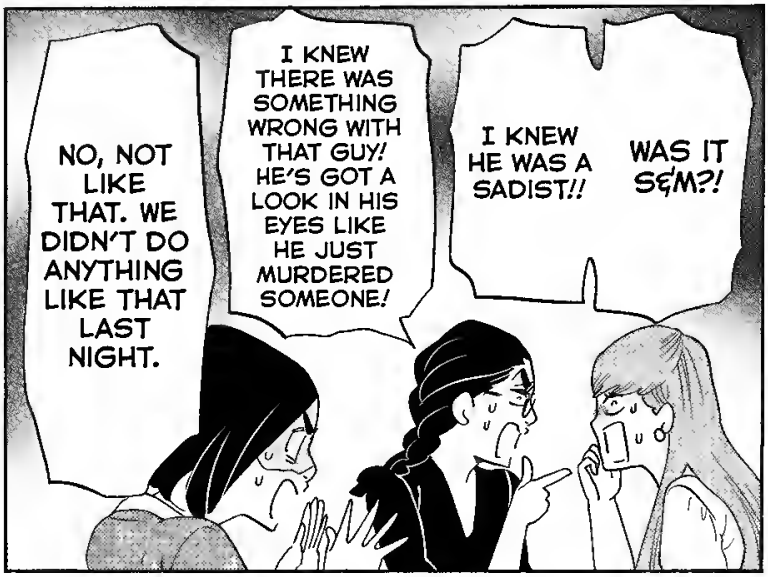



...LOOK, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOU AND MR. KEY FIRST?
YOU KNOW, LAST NIGHT.
TELL US! DID IT GO WELL?
DID YOU GO TO A HOTEL? OH, OR DID YOU TAKE HIM HOME WITH YOU?

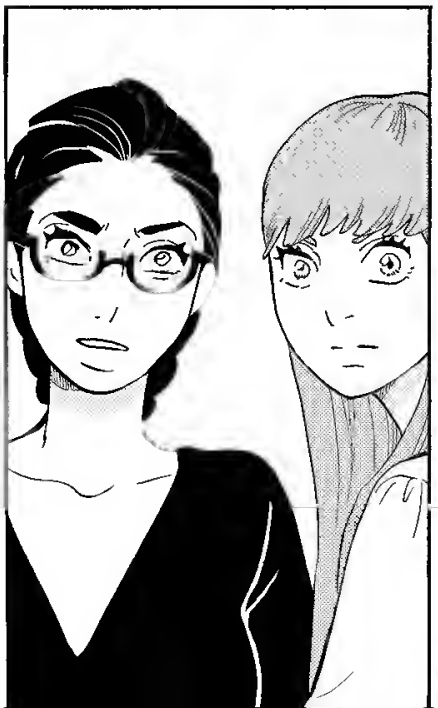

HEY! HEY! LISTEN TO THIS! THE MOTHER OF HARA-JUKU SAID I'D FIND A GOOD MAN BEFORE THE 2020 OLYMPICS!!


I LEARNED HE'S MESSED UP ON A FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL LAST NIGHT! THANKS! IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU TWO!
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG IN HIS HEAD!
OH, WHO CARES ABOUT HIM ANYMORE?

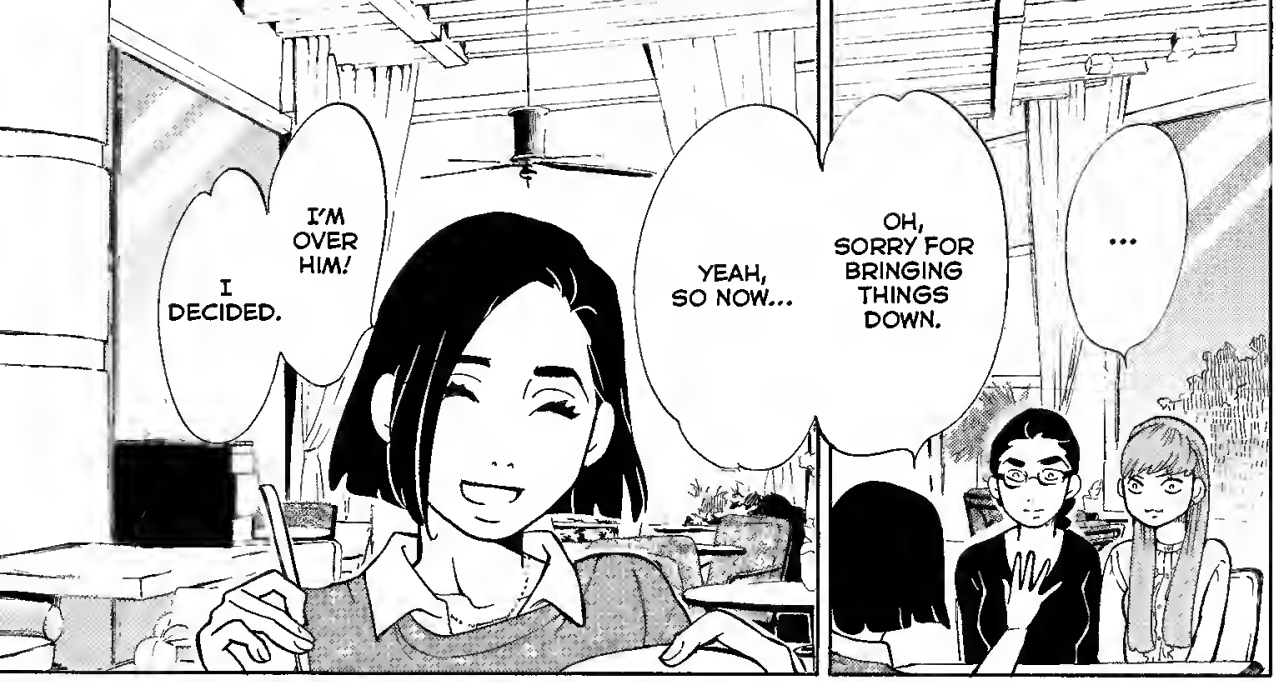
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ...
WHA?!
HE REJECTED YOU AGAIN?
That jerk?


NO, NOT LIKE THAT. WE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT LAST NIGHT.
I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THAT GUY! HE'S GOT A LOOK IN HIS EYES LIKE HE JUST MURDERED SOMEONE!
I KNEW HE WAS A SADIST!!
WAS IT S&M?!

DID HE DEMAND YOU DO SOME WEIRD STUFF ON YOUR SECOND TIME?!
DID HE TRY TO PULL SOMETHING ON YOU?
WHAT ?!

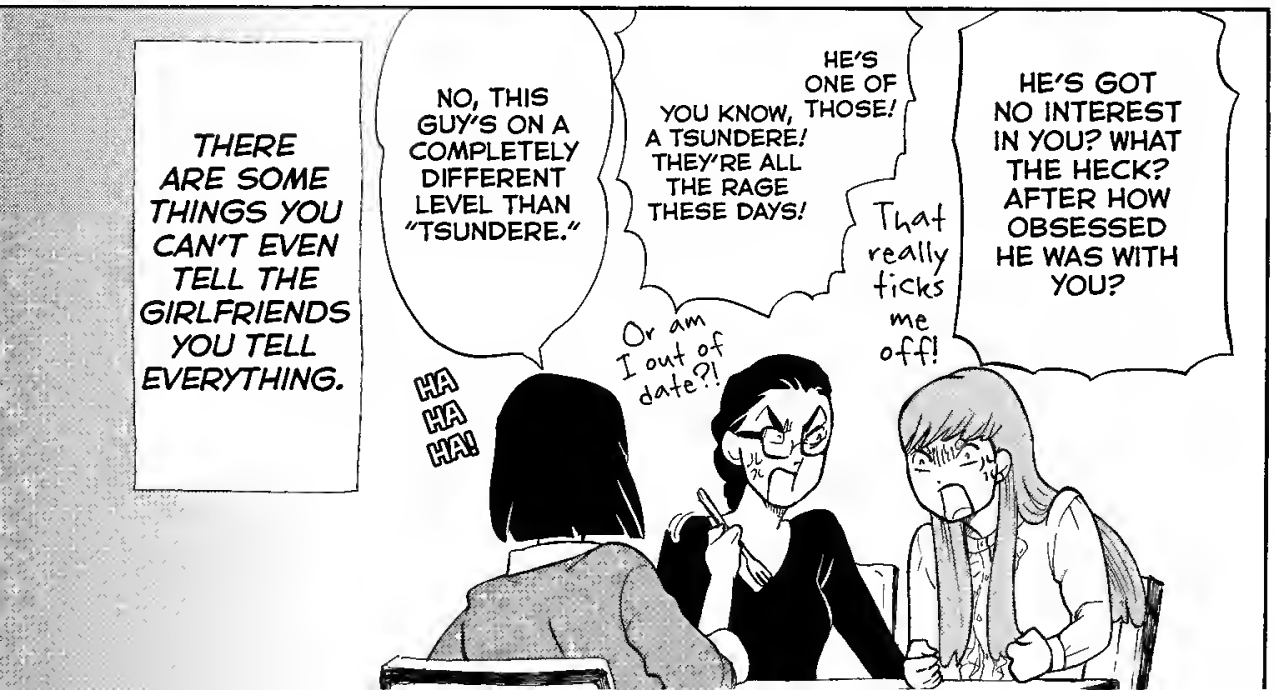


HE JUST...
...DECLARED HE HAD NO INTEREST IN ME.


I'M OVER HIM!
I DECIDED.
YEAH, SO NOW...
OH, SORRY FOR BRINGING THINGS DOWN.
...

I CAN'T SAY IT.

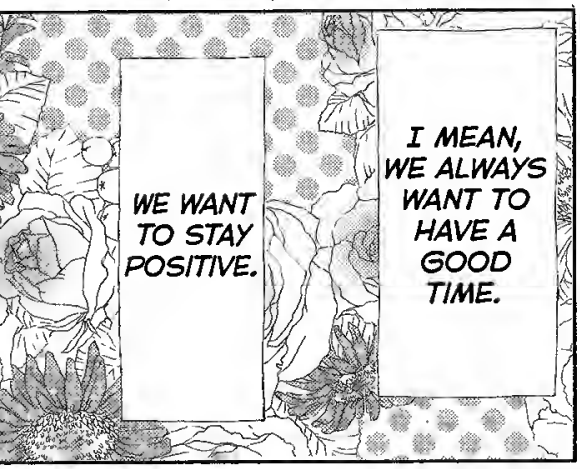
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WH-

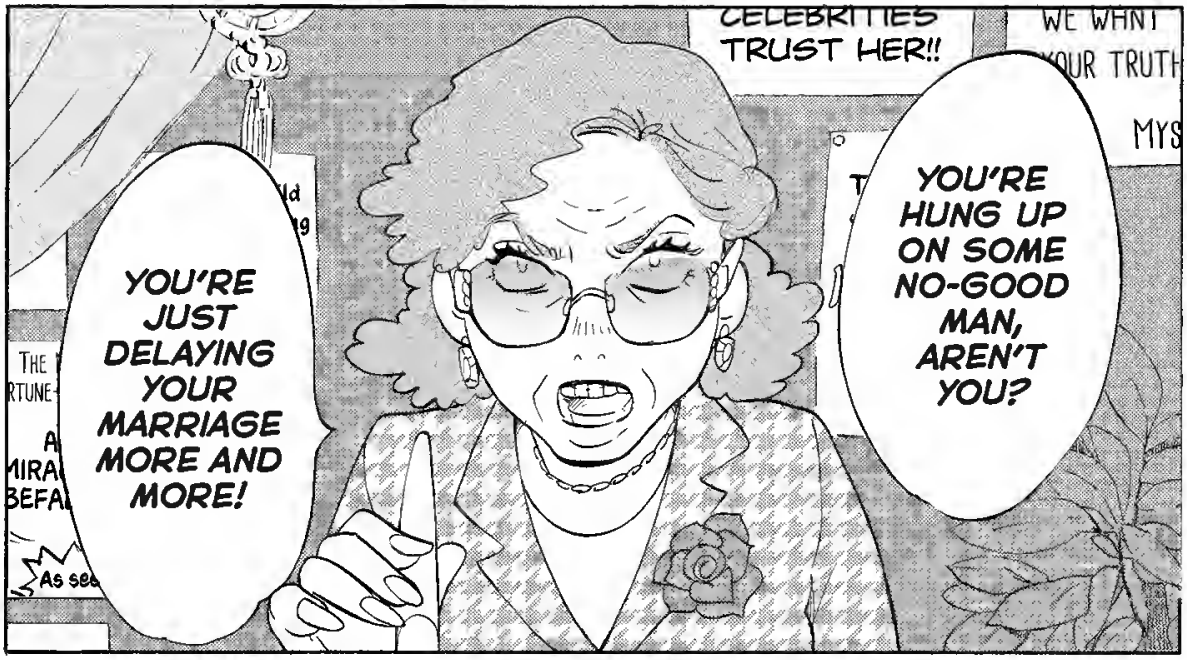

THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN'T EVEN TELL THE GIRLFRIENDS YOU TELL EVERYTHING.
NO, THIS GUY'S ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL THAN "TSUNDERE."
YOU KNOW, A TSUNDERE! THEY'RE ALL THE RAGE THESE DAYS!
HE'S ONE OF THOSE!
HE'S GOT NO INTEREST IN YOU? WHAT THE HECK? AFTER HOW OBSESSED HE WAS WITH YOU?
That really ticks me off!
Or am I out of date?!
HA HA HA!

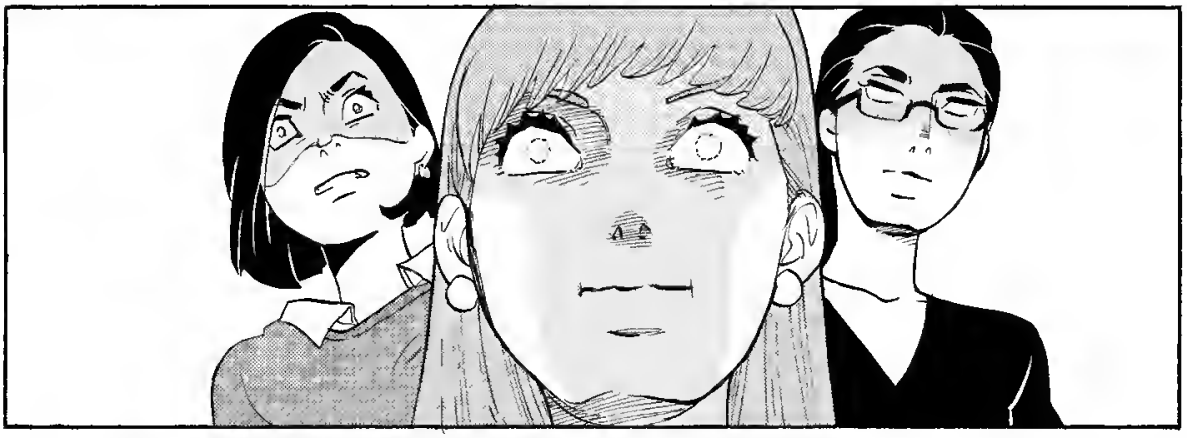
EVEN AT YOUR AGE, YOU'RE STILL GETTING TOGETHER JUST GIRLS, MAKING A BUNCH OF NOISE...
YOU WOMEN ARE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING OLDER FOR?
DAYDREAM-ING ABOUT THINGS THAT DID OR DIDN'T HAPPEN... GETTING WORKED UP...
ACTING WITHOUT MUCH THOUGHT ON NOTHING MORE THAN THOSE DAYDREAMS.

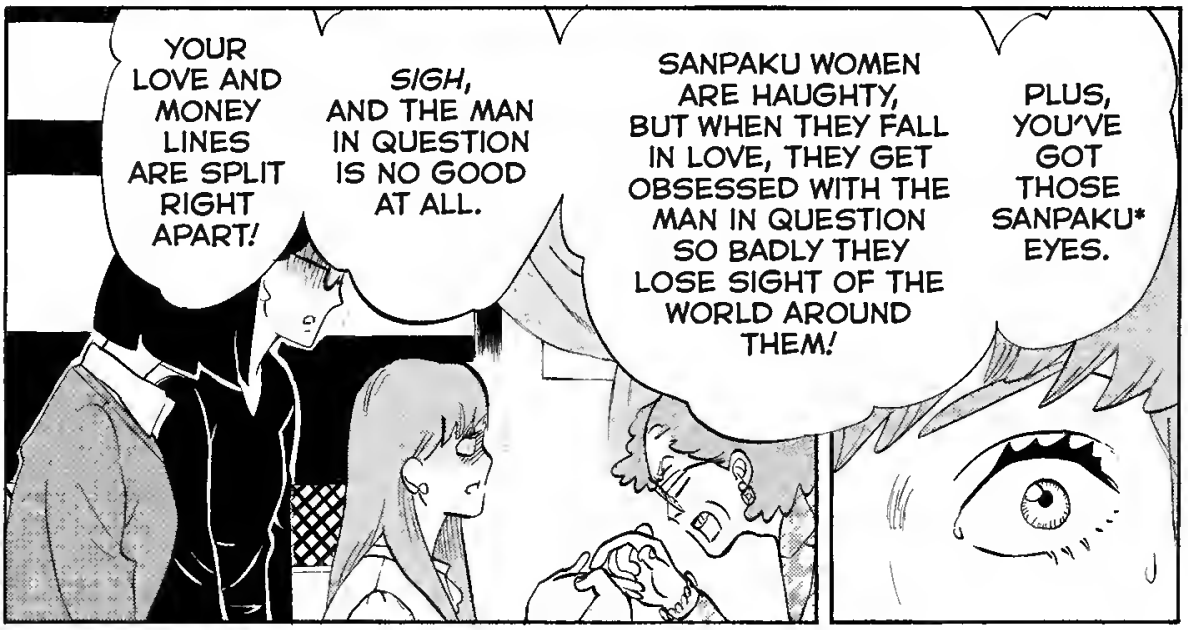
I'M NOT KOSUKE KITAJIMA*, BUT I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING.
What are you binging for?
Huh? You're going to eat all that yourself?
I CAN'T SAY IT.

*Kosuke Kitajima: an Olympic swimmer. This is a reference to a comment he made after a race.

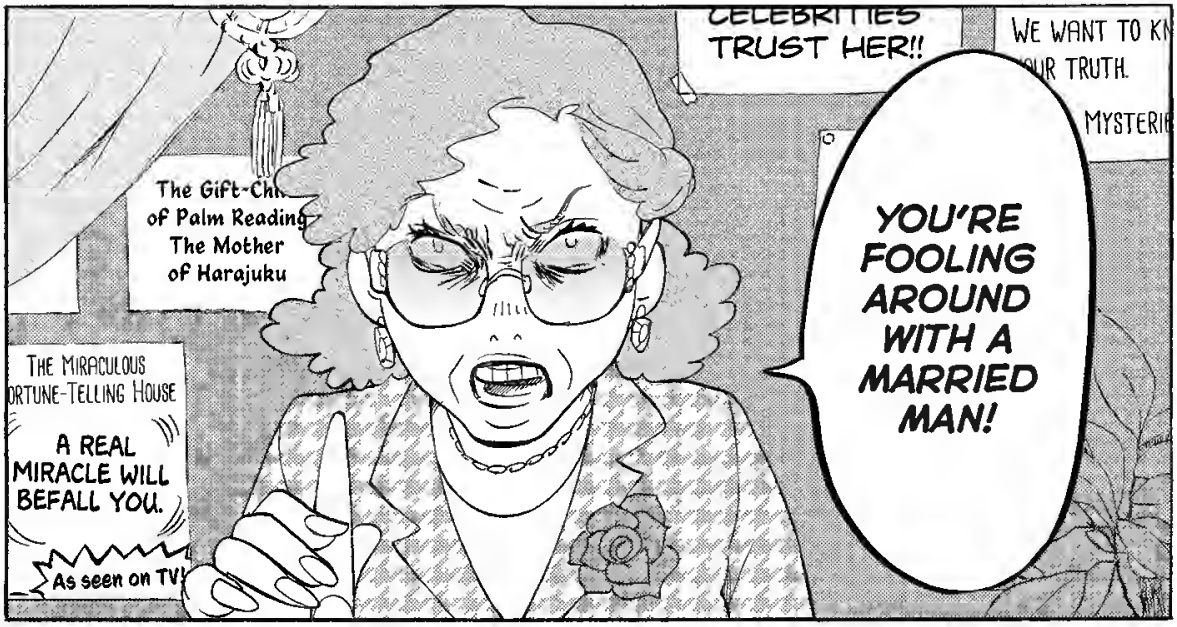



CELEBRITIES TRUST HER!!
WE WANT
YOUR TRUTH
MYS
YOU'RE JUST DELAYING YOUR MARRIAGE MORE AND MORE!
YOU'RE HUNG UP ON SOME NO-GOOD MAN, AREN'T YOU?




YOUR LOVE AND MONEY LINES ARE SPLIT RIGHT APART!
SIGH, AND THE MAN IN QUESTION IS NO GOOD AT ALL.
SANPAKU WOMEN ARE HAUGHTY, BUT WHEN THEY FALL IN LOVE, THEY GET OBSESSED WITH THE MAN IN QUESTION SO BADLY THEY LOSE SIGHT OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM!
PLUS, YOU'VE GOT THOSE SANPAKU* EYES.

Sanpaku eyes: eyes in which the whites are visible above or below the iris (when the subject is looking straight ahead).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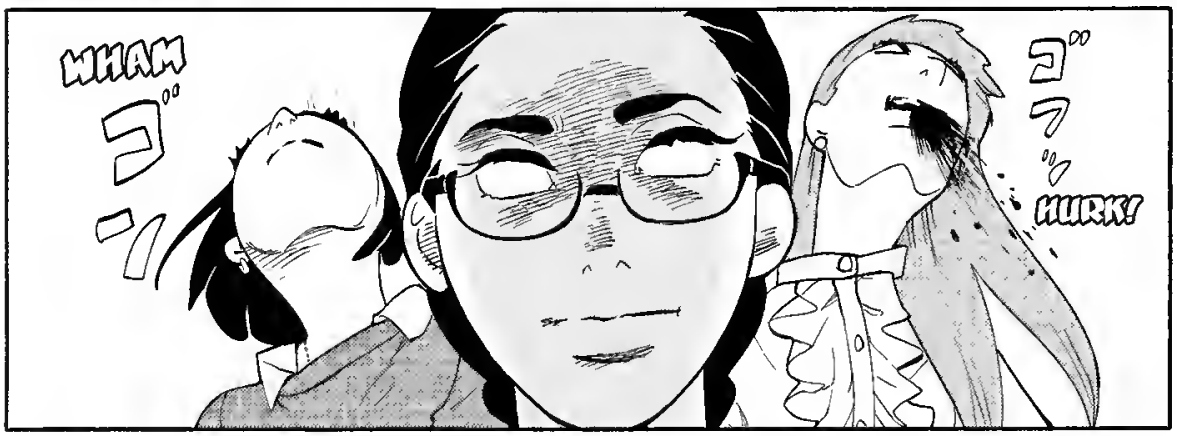
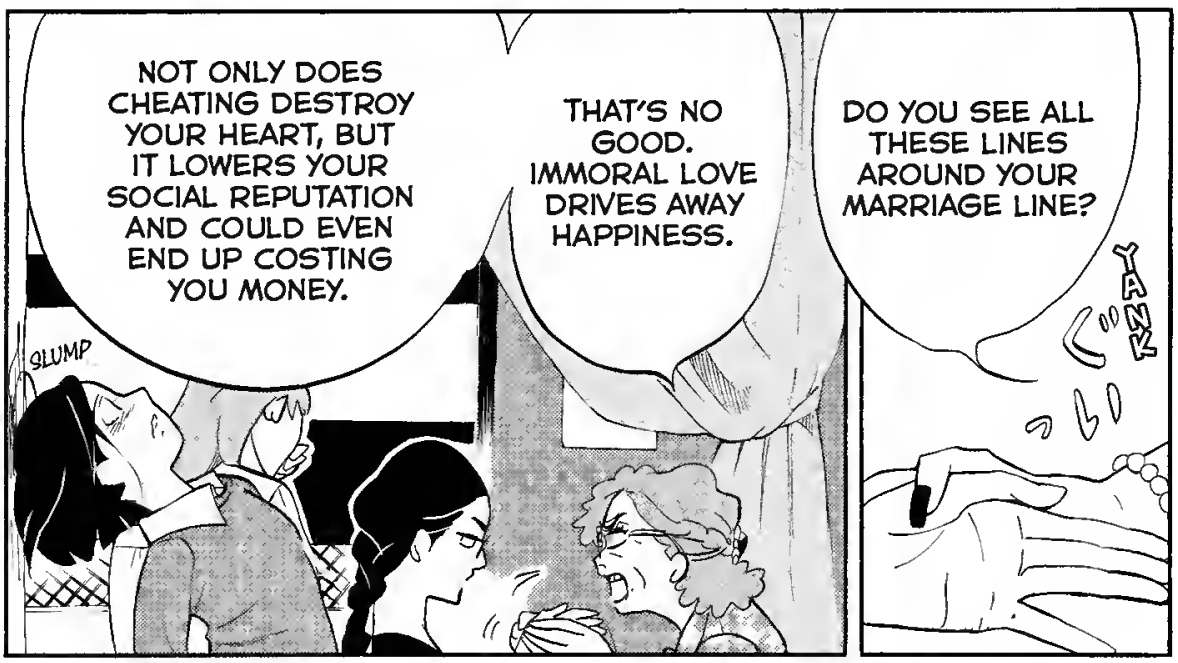
A REAL MIRACLE WILL BEFALL YOU.
As seen on TV!
YOU'RE FOOLING AROUND WITH A MARRIED MAN!

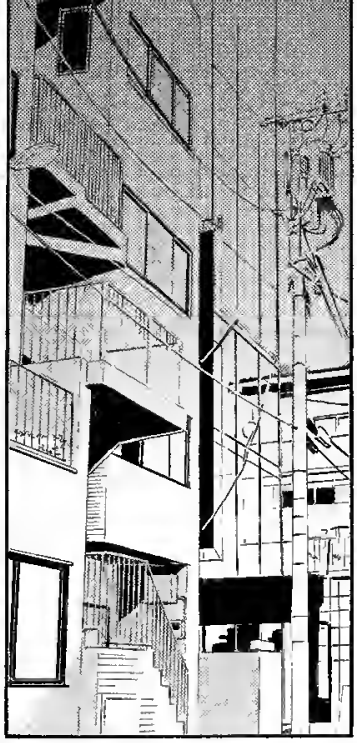

HHAM
HURK!


NOT ONLY DOES CHEATING DESTROY YOUR HEART, BUT IT LOWERS YOUR SOCIAL REPUTATION AND COULD EVEN END UP COSTING YOU MONEY.
THAT'S NO GOOD. IMMORAL LOVE DRIVES AWAY HAPPINESS.
DO YOU SEE ALL THESE LINES AROUND YOUR MARRIAGE LINE?
SLUMP
YAZK

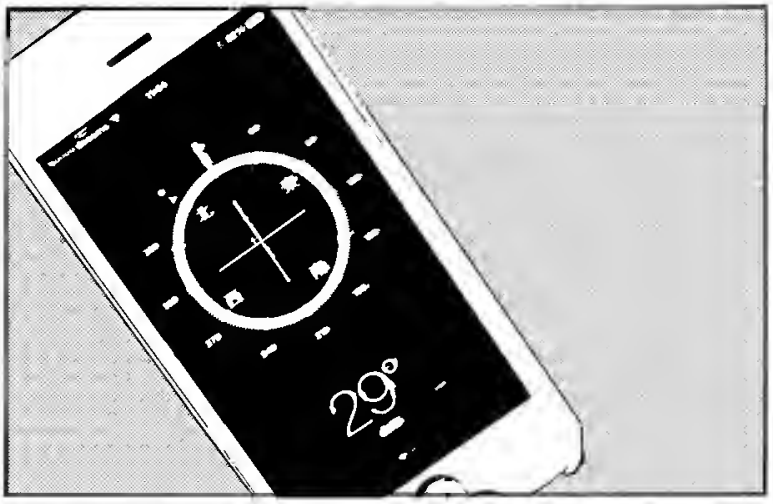
These diligent, faithful men?
W-
WHERE ...
...ARE THEY?
I'LL EVEN FORETELL THAT FOR YOU!
DROP THESE WORTH-LESS MEN RIGHT NOW AND FIND DILIGENT, FAITHFUL MEN!
BUT COMPARED TO ME, YOU THREE ARE STILL YOUNG!
CLATTER
CLATTER
YAH!
YAH!
TOSS
NORTH-EAST!!
...

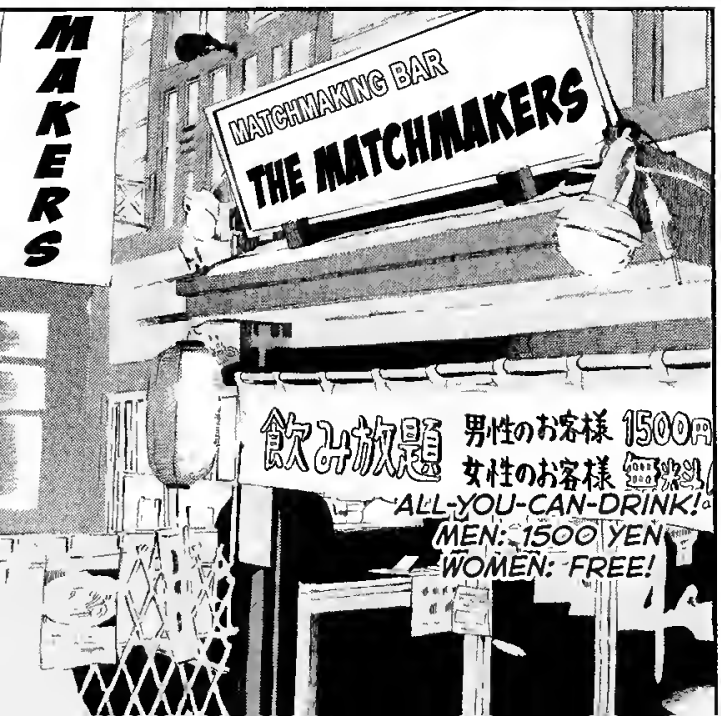
...DON'T IPHONES HAVE BUILT-IN COMPASSES?
OH!
YOU'RE RIGHT. HERE IT IS.
WOW, IPHONES ARE AMAZING.

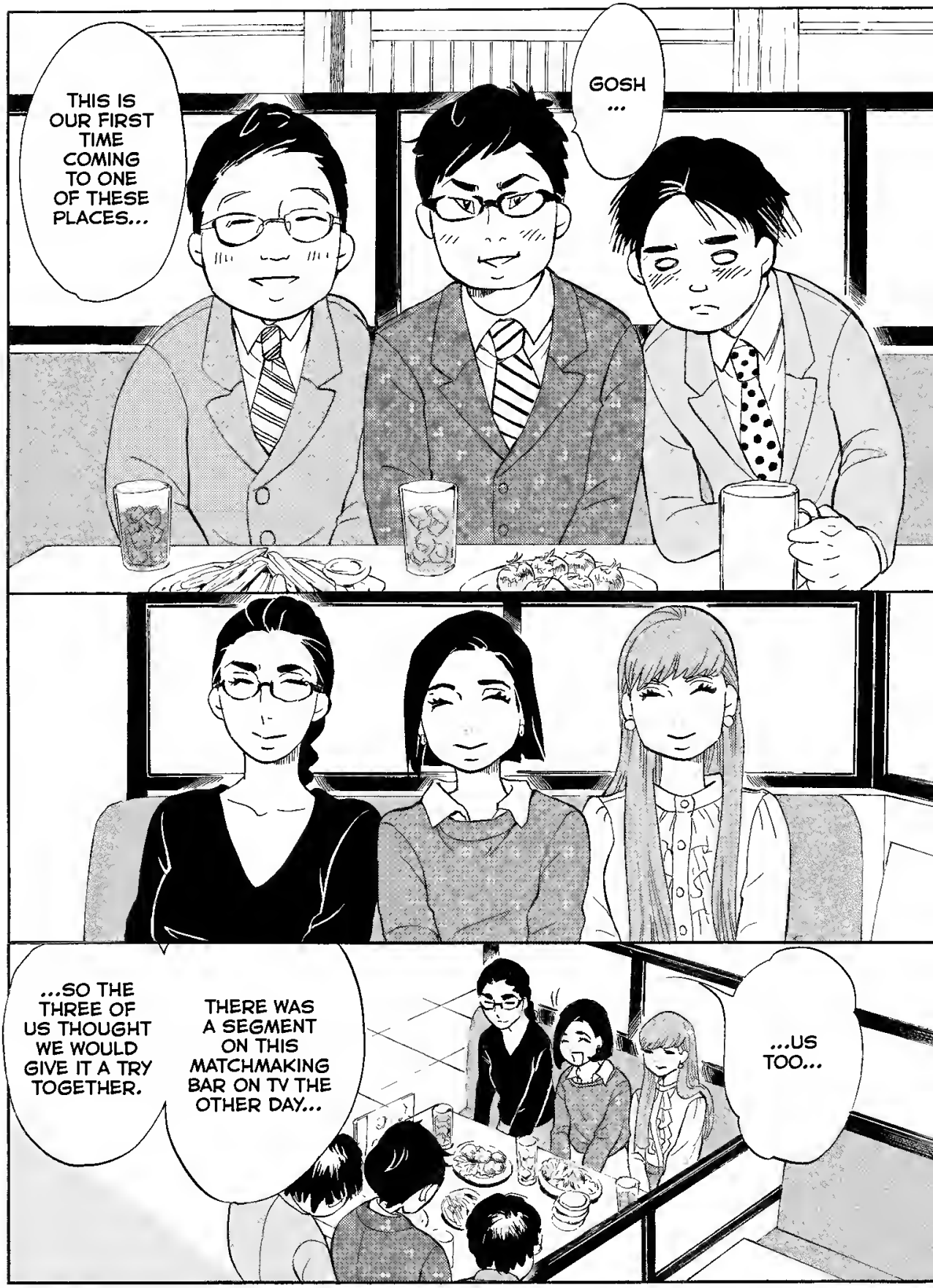
フラー
STAGGER
フラ
STAGGER



ALL RIGHT!
NORTH-EAST IS THIS WAY!


29°

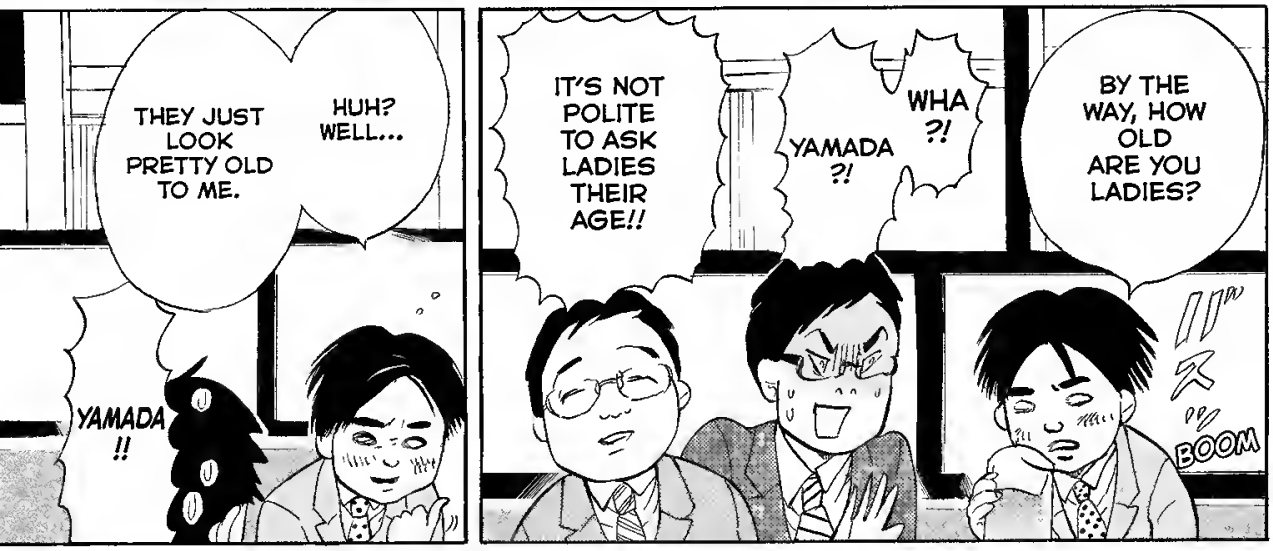

MAKERS
MATCHMAKING BAR
THE MATCHMAKERS
飲み放題
男性のお客様 1500円
女性のお客様 無料
ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK!
MEN: 1500 YEN
WOMEN: FREE!

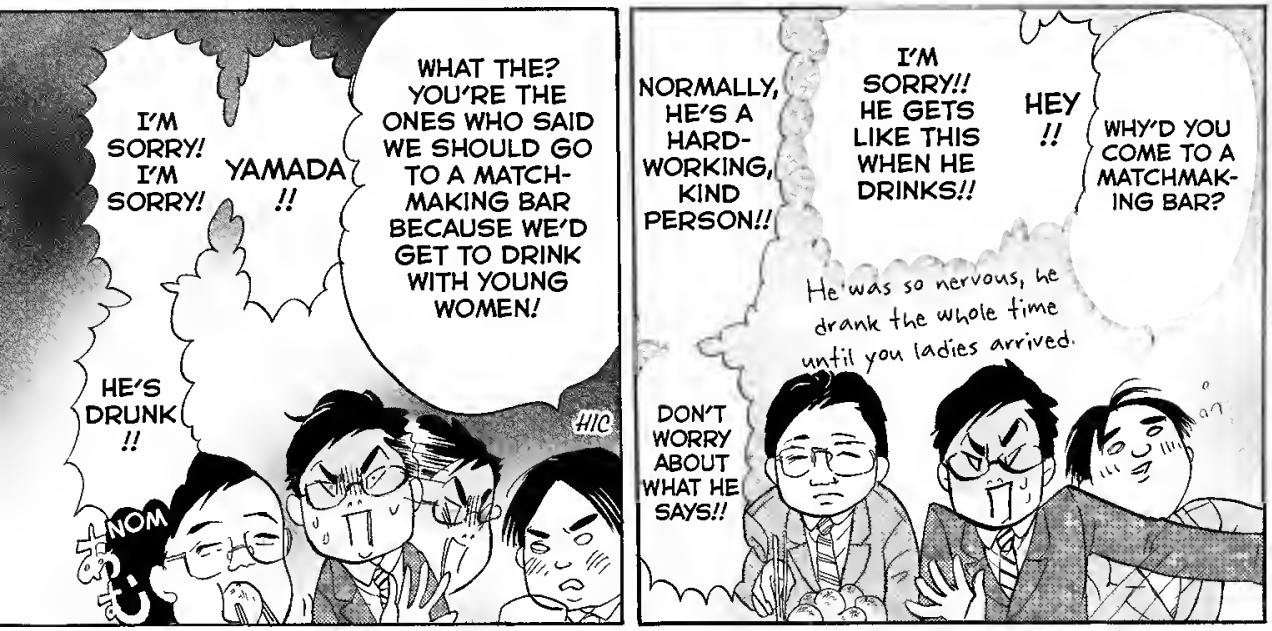

THIS IS OUR FIRST TIME COMING TO ONE OF THESE PLACES...
GOSH ...
...SO THE THREE OF US THOUGHT WE WOULD GIVE IT A TRY TOGETHER.
THERE WAS A SEGMENT ON THIS MATCHMAKING BAR ON TV THE OTHER DAY...
...US TOO...

CLICK
カチ
BEEP ピ
BEEP ピ
BEEP ピ
BEEP ピ
POWER LEVEL: 2
戦闘力
2
POWER LEVEL: 3
戦闘力
3
POWER LEVEL: 2
戦闘力
2
戦闘力
186
POWER LEVEL:
186
BEEP ピ
BEEP ピ
BEEP ピ
ALL RIGHT, WHO ORDERED THE GRAPE-FRUIT CHUHAI?

ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN OUR SYSTEM.
THE PRICES ARE ALL YOU CAN DRINK FOR 1500 YEN PER HALF HOUR FOR MEN, WHILE WOMEN DRINK FOR FREE. BUT ALL FOOD HAS TO BE PURCHASED INDIVIDUALLY LIKE ANYWHERE ELSE.
料金システム
男性
男性 1500円
女性 無料
HA HA!
HEHEH!
PLEASE DON'T CHANGE SEATS!
I'M SORRY. YAMADA HERE IS ALREADY DRUNK.
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE SEATS, JUST TELL ME AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT FOR YOU.
UM...
SO THE THREE OF YOU ALL WORK TOGETHER?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
WE'RE JUST YOUR AVERAGE, EVERYDAY SALARYMEN. NOTHING MORE.
COULD I HAVE A BUSINESS CARD?
WHA?! KAORI!!
GLUG GLUG
SPACEY

OH, IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL...
YOU'RE WITH XX CORPORATION ?!
WOW !!
WE'RE PRETTY DOWN ON OUR LUCK AT THE MOMENT.
DAZED
GLUG GLUG
HUH?!
THANK YOU.
SURE, I'VE GOT A FEW ON ME...
OH...
HERE!
SPACEY
SLIDE


THEY JUST LOOK PRETTY OLD TO ME.
HUH? WELL...
YAMADA !!
IT'S NOT POLITE TO ASK LADIES THEIR AGE!!
YAMADA ?!
WHA ?!
BY THE WAY, HOW OLD ARE YOU LADIES?
BOOM


I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
YAMADA !!
WHAT THE? YOU'RE THE ONES WHO SAID WE SHOULD GO TO A MATCH-MAKING BAR BECAUSE WE'D GET TO DRINK WITH YOUNG WOMEN!
HE'S DRUNK !!
HIC
NOM
NORMALLY, HE'S A HARD-WORKING, KIND PERSON!!
I'M SORRY!! HE GETS LIKE THIS WHEN HE DRINKS!!
HEY !!
WHY'D YOU COME TO A MATCHMAK-ING BAR?
He was so nervous, he drank the whole time until you ladies arrived.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT HE SAYS!!

ARE YOU LEAVING ALREADY, LADIES?
OH?
ひょこっ
POP

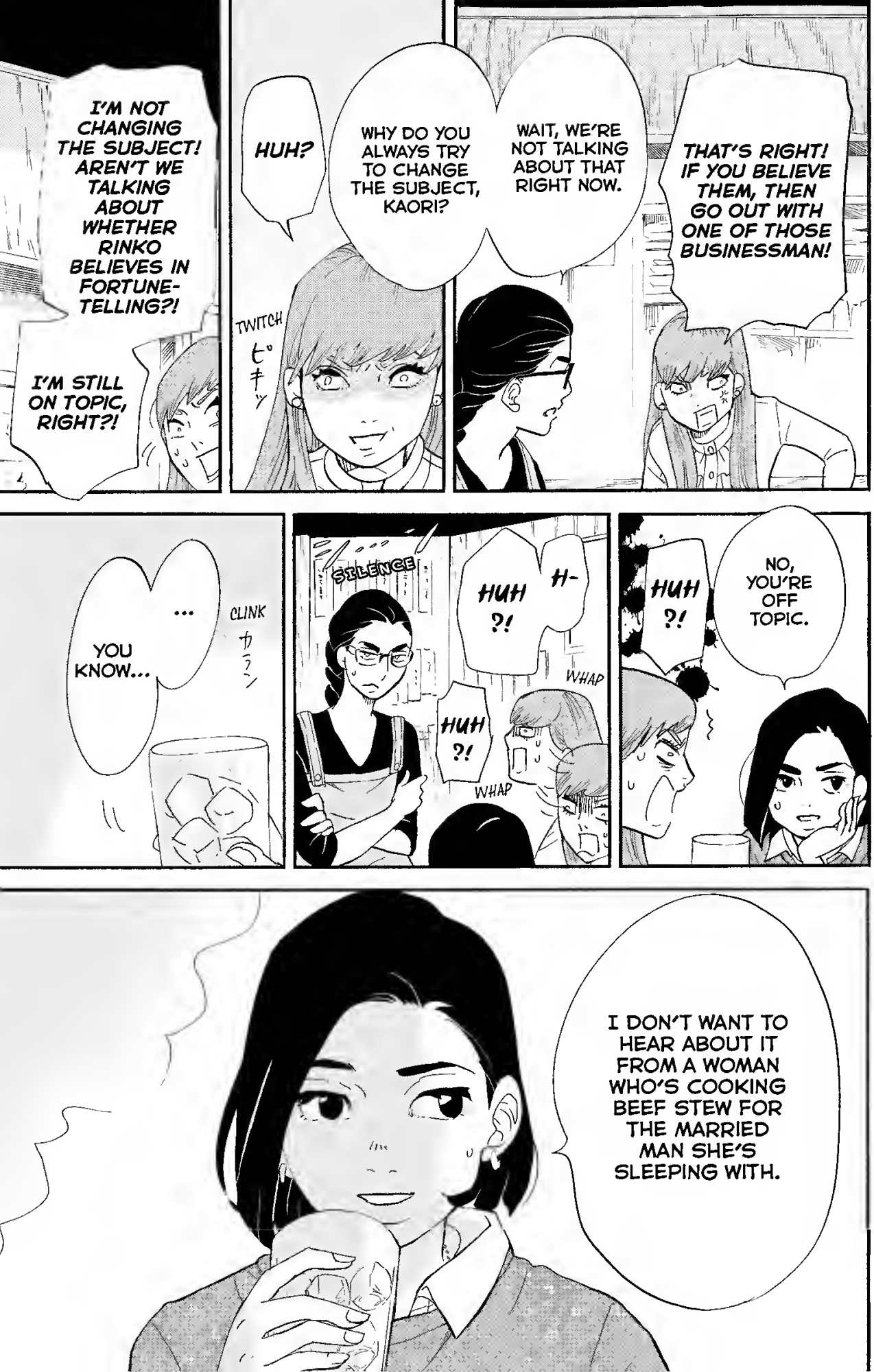
MATCHMAKING BAR
THE MATCHMAKERS
ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK!
MEN: 1500 YEN
WOMEN: FREE!
飲み放題
男性のお客様
女性のお客様
TMP TMP TMP

酒処
PUB

WE GET REALLY BUSY ON THE WEEKENDS!
DON'T BE DISCOUR-AGED. PLEASE COME AGAIN.
DIDN'T FIND THE MAN YOU WERE LOOKING FOR?
HERE! TAKE SOME FOOD COUPONS!
TP SHINE
SHINE

GLUB
GLUB
...BUT...
THEY SEEMED PRETTY NICE OUTSIDE THAT DRUNK, RIGHT?
AND THEY ARE BUSINESS-MAN.
THEN YOU GO OUT WITH THEM.
FLASH
HUH?
NO WAY. I CAN'T.
WHY NOT?
THE MOTHER OF HARAJUKU TOLD US TO GO NORTHEAST AND WE RAN RIGHT INTO THOSE GUYS WHEN WE DID, SO THEY COULD BE OUR DESTINED HUSBANDS.
NO. ONLY IDIOTS BELIEVE IN FORTUNE-TELLING.
HUH?
SHE NAILED YOU LIKE A HAMMER, KOYUKI.
WHEN SHE'S THAT RIGHT, ALL YOU CAN DO IS LAUGH.
HEY, DIDN'T SHE TELL YOU THAT SANPAKU WOMEN HAVE NO LUCK WITH MEN?
DON'T TALK ABOUT MY SANPAKU EYES!!
I'VE GOT A COMPLEX ABOUT THOSE!! HOW MEAN!!
THAT OLD BAG WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!!
YAAAAARGH!!
WHAM
I...

NO.
I DON'T THINK SEEING MARRIED MEN APPLIES TO EVERYONE.
ALL SHE'S DOING IS SAYING VAGUE STUFF THAT COULD APPLY TO ANYONE!
DON'T BELIEVE IN FORTUNE-TELLING.
ISN'T WRITING A JOB THAT INVOLVES THINKING EVERYTHING THROUGH FROM ALL ANGLES?
GLUB
GLUB
...I'M SURPRISED A SCREEN-WRITER LIKE YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVES IN THAT FLIMFLAM.
TWITCH
SNAP
SHOULD YOU REALLY TAKE THOSE PARLOR TRICKS AT FACE VALUE, AS A WRITER?

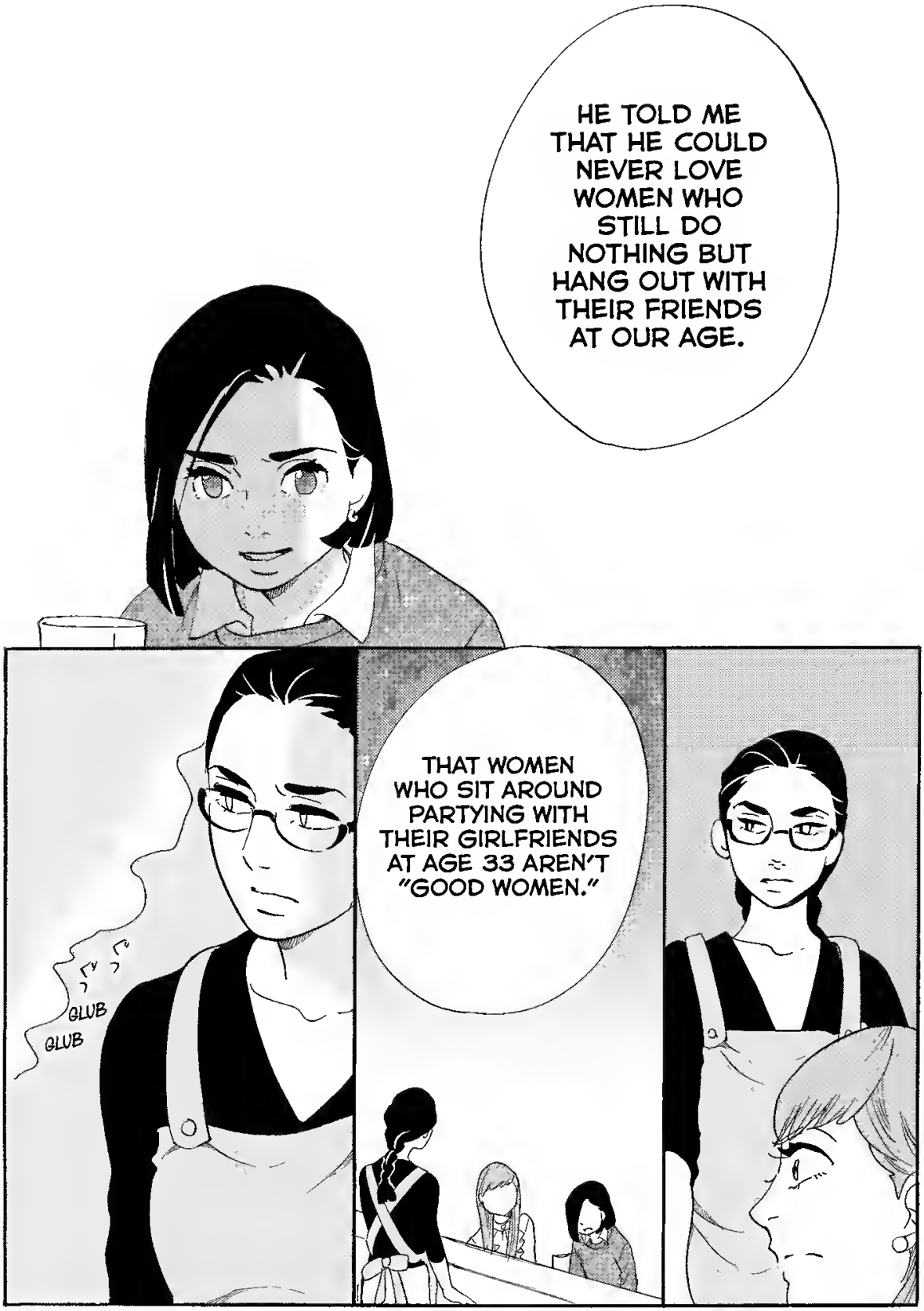

I'M NOT CHANGING THE SUBJECT! AREN'T WE TALKING ABOUT WHETHER RINKO BELIEVES IN FORTUNE-TELLING?!
I'M STILL ON TOPIC, RIGHT?!
HUH?
TWITCH
ピキッ
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS TRY TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, KAORI?
WAIT, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW.
THAT'S RIGHT! IF YOU BELIEVE THEM, THEN GO OUT WITH ONE OF THOSE BUSINESSMAN!
...
CLINK
カラン
YOU KNOW...
SILENCE
H-
HUH ?!
WHAP
HUH ?!
WHAP
HUH ?!
NO, YOU'RE OFF TOPIC.
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT FROM A WOMAN WHO'S COOKING BEEF STEW FOR THE MARRIED MAN SHE'S SLEEPING WITH.

KOYUKI.
... BECAUSE STEW MEAT WAS CHEAP AT THE SUPER-MARKET.
NO, IT'S NOT! I'M MAK-ING THIS ...
I thought I'd be eating some with rice after closing time!
THEN I CAN'T HAVE ANY?!
THAT'S WHAT THIS STEW IS FOR?!
HUH ?!
THUNK
FLASH

STOP WASTING YOUR TIME ON THAT PIECE OF GARBAGE.
YOU'RE A GOOD COOK, SO IT'S A WASTE.
...GIVE IT A REST. THIS HOME WRECK-ING.
JUST ...

IT'S NOT LIKE I'M CHEATING WITH A HAPPILY MARRIED MAN.
HE HAS HIS OWN REASONS FOR LIVING SEPARATE FROM HIS WIFE.
MR. MARUI ISN'T A PIECE OF GARBAGE.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

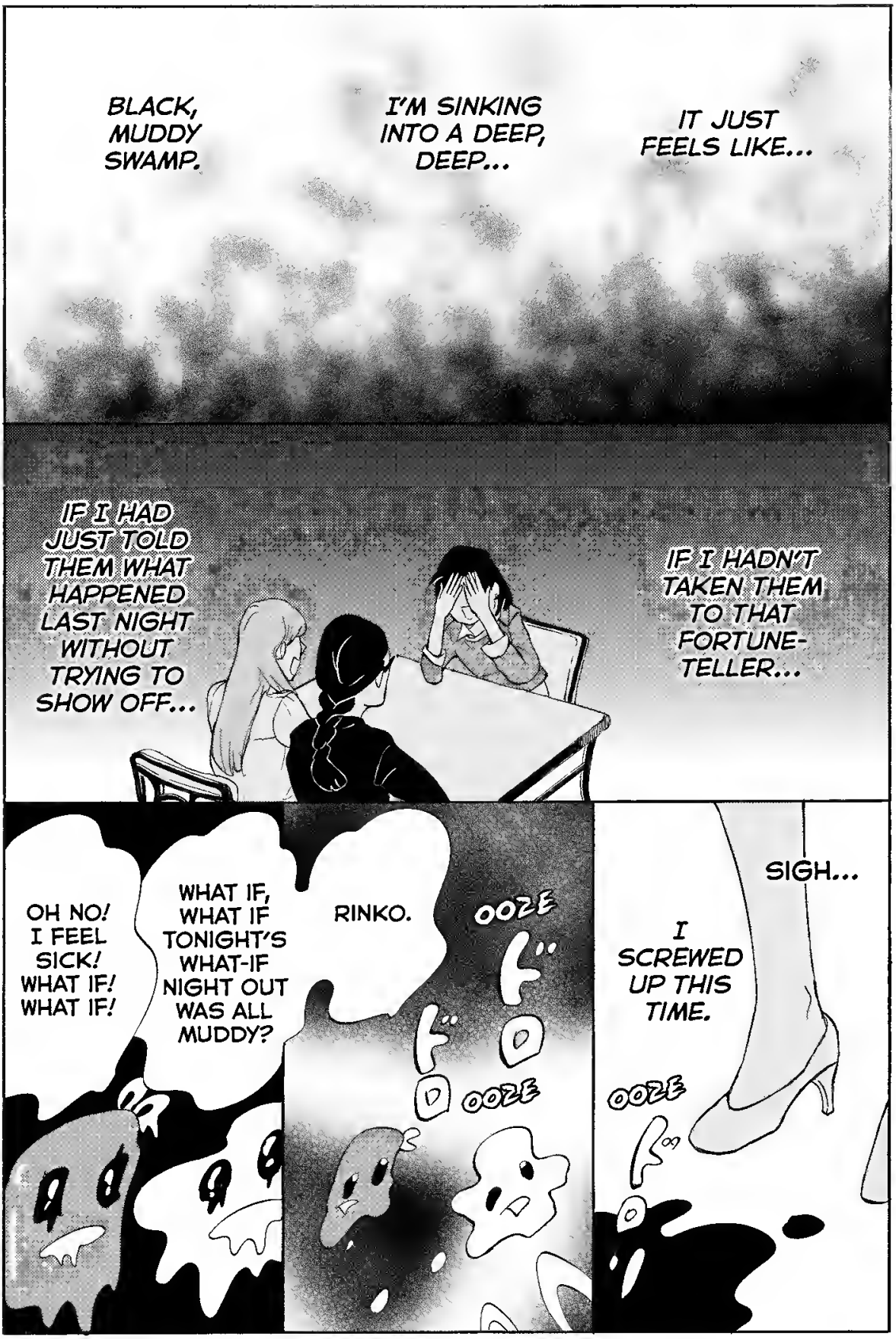
HE TOLD ME SOMETHING.
NO.
DON'T SAY IT.
DON'T TELL THEM.


HE TOLD ME THAT HE COULD NEVER LOVE WOMEN WHO STILL DO NOTHING BUT HANG OUT WITH THEIR FRIENDS AT OUR AGE.
GLUB GLUB
THAT WOMEN WHO SIT AROUND PARTYING WITH THEIR GIRLFRIENDS AT AGE 33 AREN'T "GOOD WOMEN."

THAT GROWN WOMEN WHO RETREAT INTO FORTUNE-TELLING AREN'T "GOOD WOMEN"?
HA!
SIGH.
NOW I'VE DONE IT.
NO. I'M TALKING ABOUT THAT PHONE CALL.
HUH?
YOU'RE SAYING IT FREAKED HIM OUT THAT WE ENCOURAGED YOU?
WHAT THE HECK? DON'T TRY TO BLAME IT ON US!
ONCE GIRLS GET LIKE THIS, IT'S ALL OVER.
IT'S NO USE.
HEY!
THUNK
...
I'M GOING HOME, OKAY?

SIGH...
酒肴
NONBEE
ピンポーン
THUNK
HEY...
NOT SO FAST, RINKO!
LET HER GO.

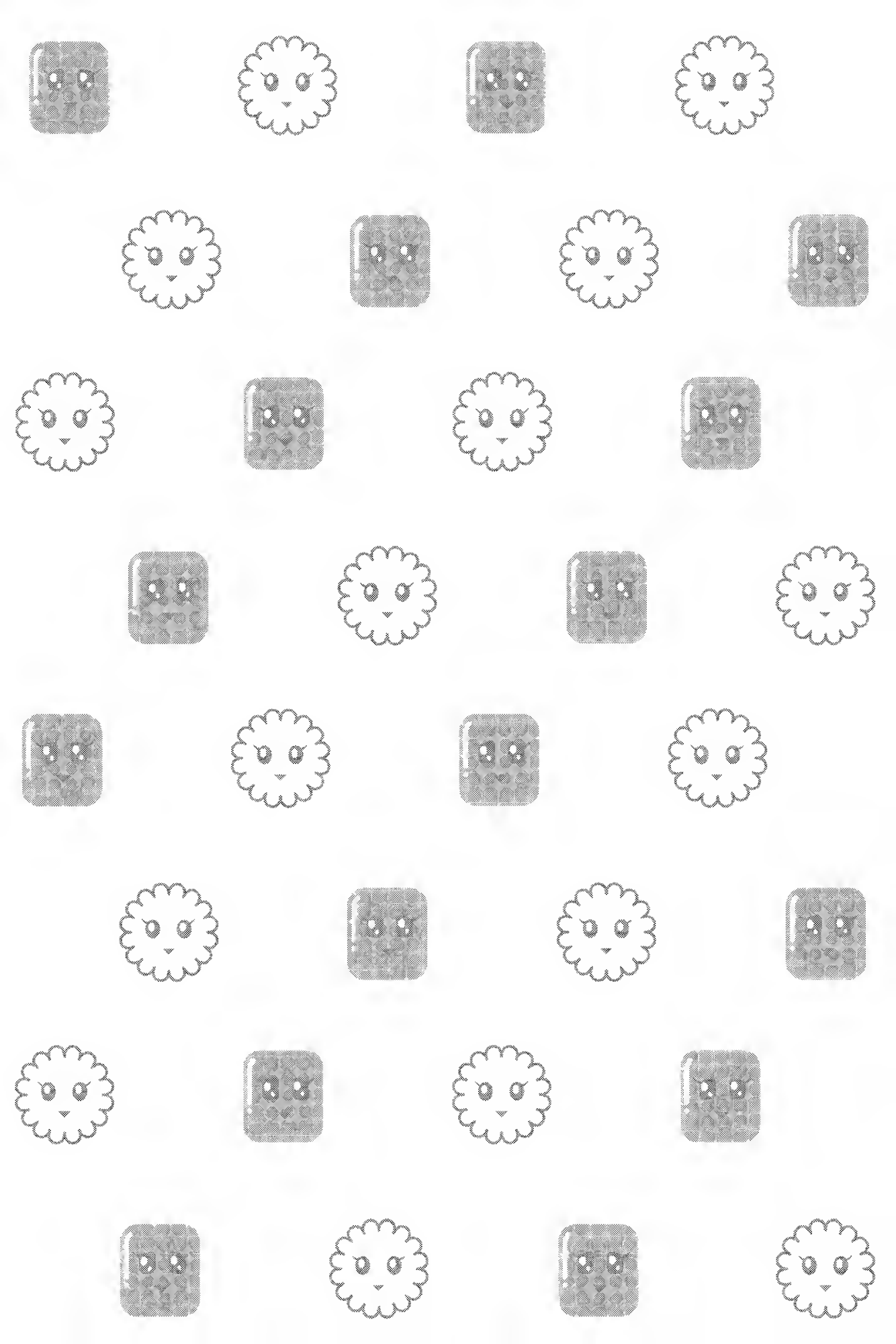
...BUT WHEN I FIGHT WITH MY GIRLFRIENDS, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO DRINK.
WHEN I GET REJECTED BY A MAN, IT MAKES ME WANT TO DRINK...
THIS IS THE WORST.

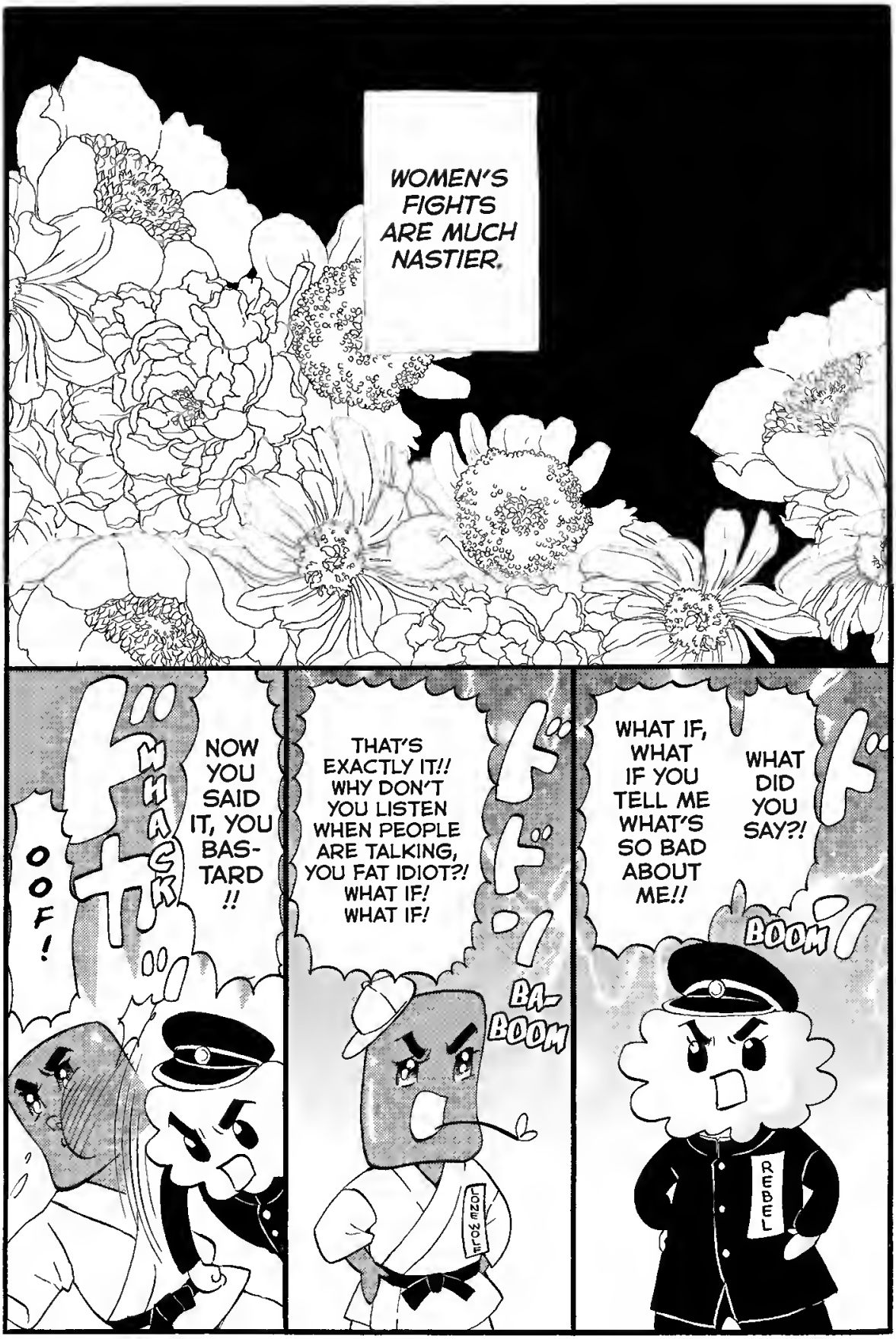

BLACK, MUDDY SWAMP.
I'M SINKING INTO A DEEP, DEEP...
IT JUST FEELS LIKE...
IF I HAD JUST TOLD THEM WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT WITHOUT TRYING TO SHOW OFF...
IF I HADN'T TAKEN THEM TO THAT FORTUNE-TELLER...
OH NO! I FEEL SICK! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
WHAT IF, WHAT IF TONIGHT'S WHAT-IF NIGHT OUT WAS ALL MUDDY?
RINKO.
OOZE
OOZE
SIGH...
I SCREWED UP THIS TIME.
OOZE

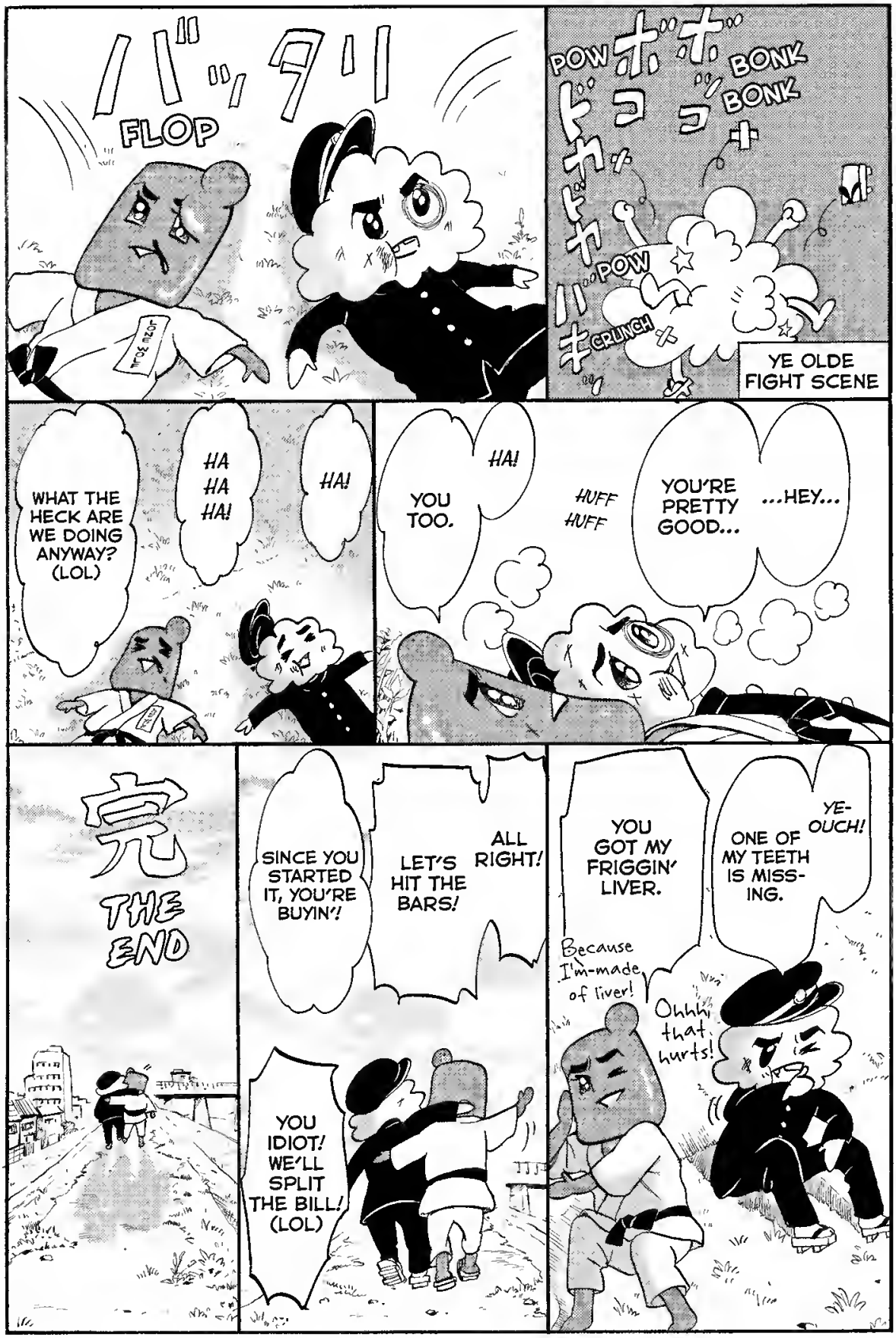
BECAUSE I'M UN-HAPPY, I DRAGGED MY FRIENDS INTO IT...
I'M THE WORST KIND OF MUDDY WOMAN.

ACT 17

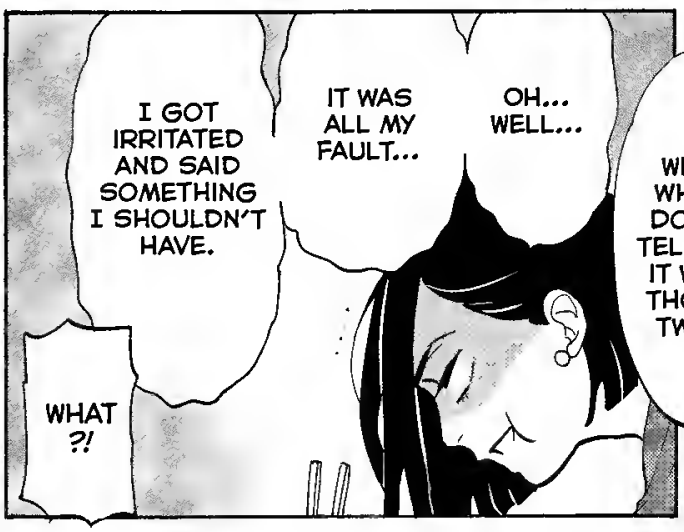
PITY PARTY WOMEN




WOMEN'S FIGHTS ARE MUCH NASTIER.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
BOOM!!
REBEL
WHAT IF, WHAT IF YOU TELL ME WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT ME!!
THAT'S EXACTLY IT!! WHY DON'T YOU LISTEN WHEN PEOPLE ARE TALKING, YOU FAT IDIOT?! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
BA-BOOM
LONE WOLF
NOW YOU SAID IT, YOU BAS-TARD !!
WHACK
OOF!


FLOP
POW
BONK
BONK
POW
CRUNCH
YE OLDE FIGHT SCENE
WHAT THE HECK ARE WE DOING ANYWAY? (LOL)
HA HA HA!
HA!
HA!
YOU TOO.
HUFF HUFF
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD...
...HEY...
完
THE END
SINCE YOU STARTED IT, YOU'RE BUYIN'!
LET'S HIT THE BARS!
ALL RIGHT!
YOU IDIOT! WE'LL SPLIT THE BILL! (LOL)
YOU GOT MY FRIGGIN' LIVER.
Because I'm made of liver!
ONE OF MY TEETH IS MISS-ING.
YE-OUCH!
Ohhh that hurts!

FIGHTS ?
DON'T GO LIKE THAT...
WOMEN'S FIGHTS...


I GOT IRRITATED AND SAID SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T HAVE.
IT WAS ALL MY FAULT...
OH... WELL...
WHAT ?!

WOW, I'VE FINALLY STARTED HALLUCINATING TO MY FRIED LIVER LUNCHES ...
YOU HAD A FIGHT, RINKO?
WITH WHO? DON'T TELL ME IT WAS THOSE TWO?

I KNOW. WE'RE NOT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL ANYMORE, SO FIGHTING LIKE THAT IS PRETTY FUNNY, RIGHT?
THAT IS SOOO FUNNY! (LOL)
A GROUP OF THIRTY-SOMETHING BEST FRIENDS GETTING INTO A "FIGHT"?
How cute!
Laugh! Laugh at us!

WHEN YOU HAVE A FIGHT WITH YOUR GIRLFRIENDS...
H-HOW DO YOU MAKE UP WITH THEM?
OKAY! WHAT IS IT, RINKO?
HEY... I HAVE A QUESTION FOR OUR YOUNG HOPE, THE SCREENWRITING PRODIGY, THE GREAT MAMI.
KER-CHUNK
NOT WHEN YOU WERE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL !!
And you were in the Pr-tty C-re era?!
WELL, THIS ONE TIME I GAVE ONE MY ABSOLUTE FAVORITE PR-TTY C-RE TRANSFORMATION WAND TO MAKE UP.
I HEARD THAT YAMANBA*-ESQUE SCREAM FROM OUT IN THE HALL.

*Yamanba: both the "Mountain Witch" from Japanese folklore and a more extreme offshoot of the Ganguro fashion style named after her because of the presumed resemblance of its adherents to the witch.

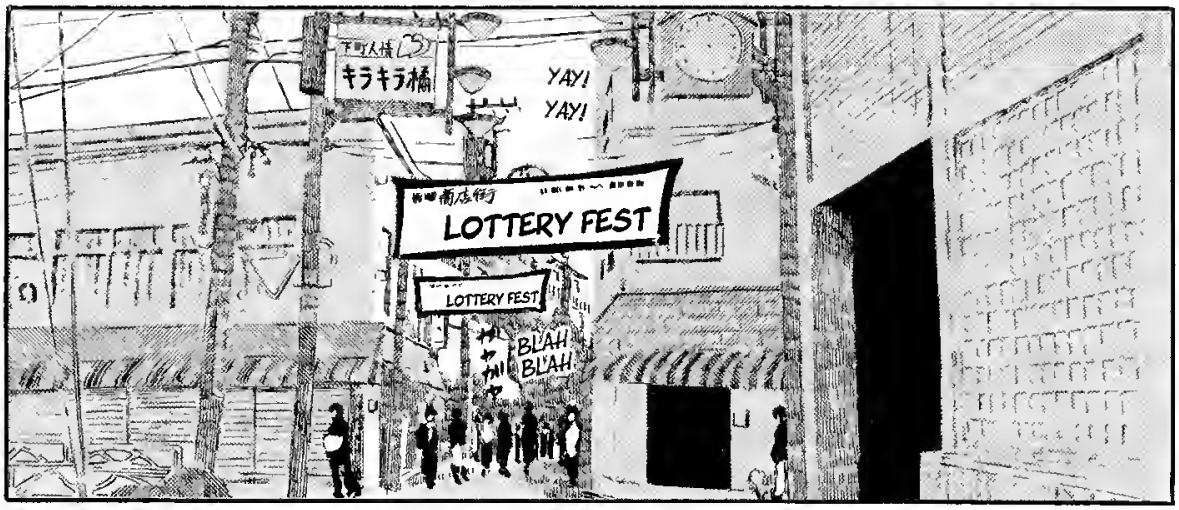
WHA?!
OH!
THANKS FOR COMING!
SORRY TO DRAG YOU DOWN TO THE OFFICE, MR. KEY!
NO TROUBLE AT ALL.
I WANTED TO READ THE REWRITES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
BEFORE EVEN THE DIRECTOR COULD SEE THEM.
PLOP
LISTEN TO THIS! RINKO HAD A FIGHT WITH HER FRIENDS!

OH?
BECAUSE OF ME?

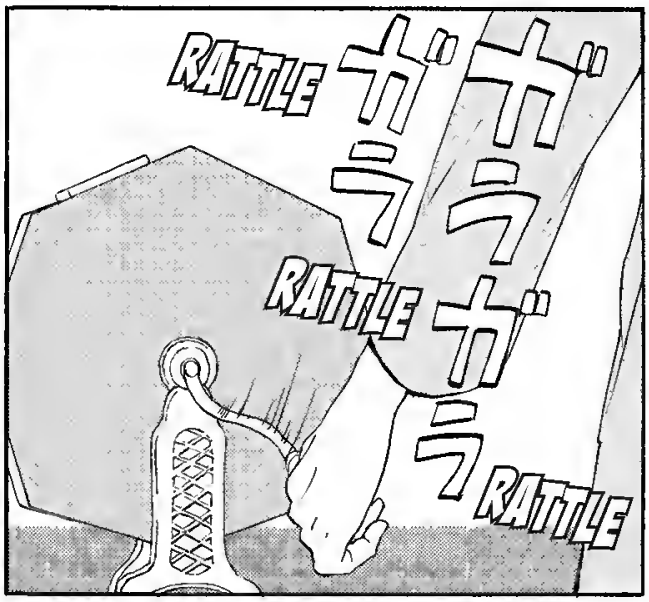
OH! I GET IT!
BUT A MAN NOT GOING ALONG WITH YOUR MATCH-MAKING SCHEMES IS ALL IT TOOK TO SET YOU AGAINST EACH OTHER.
FIRST, YOU WERE STILL PLAYING "BEST FRIENDS" AT YOUR AGE...
I'll use that in a story sometime!
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE WALTZING IN HERE AFTER WHAT YOU SAID...
Like nothing happened ...
YOU'RE LIKE THOSE COUNTRY MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS!
AND WENT TO SCHOOL IN AOYAMA FOR ELEMEN-TARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL.
WAS BORN IN SHIBUYA, RAISED IN MINATO CITY...
BY THE WAY, MR. KEY...
RINKO! CALM DOWN! HE WAS SPEAKING METAPHORI-CALLY!
HOW DO YOU KNOW WE'RE FROM THE BACK-WOODS OF SAITAMA...?
H-

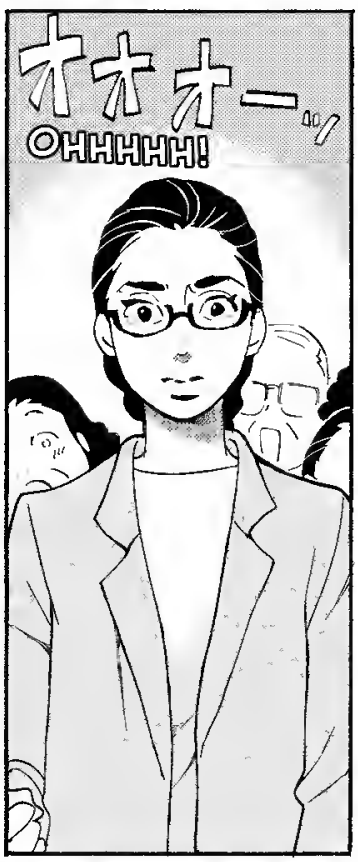
*Note: These are all places in Tokyo.

MAMI, LET'S START THE MEETING. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
OKAY!
WE RECENTLY GOT AN OUTLET STORE JUST A 40 MINUTE DRIVE AWAY!
DON'T MAKE FUN OF XXXX IN SAITAMA!!


キラキラ橋
YAY!
YAY!
LOTTERY FEST
LOTTERY FEST
BLAH BLAH

CLATTER
コロ〜ン


RATTLE
ガラガラ
RATTLE
ガラガラ
RATTLE


オオオー
OHHHHH!

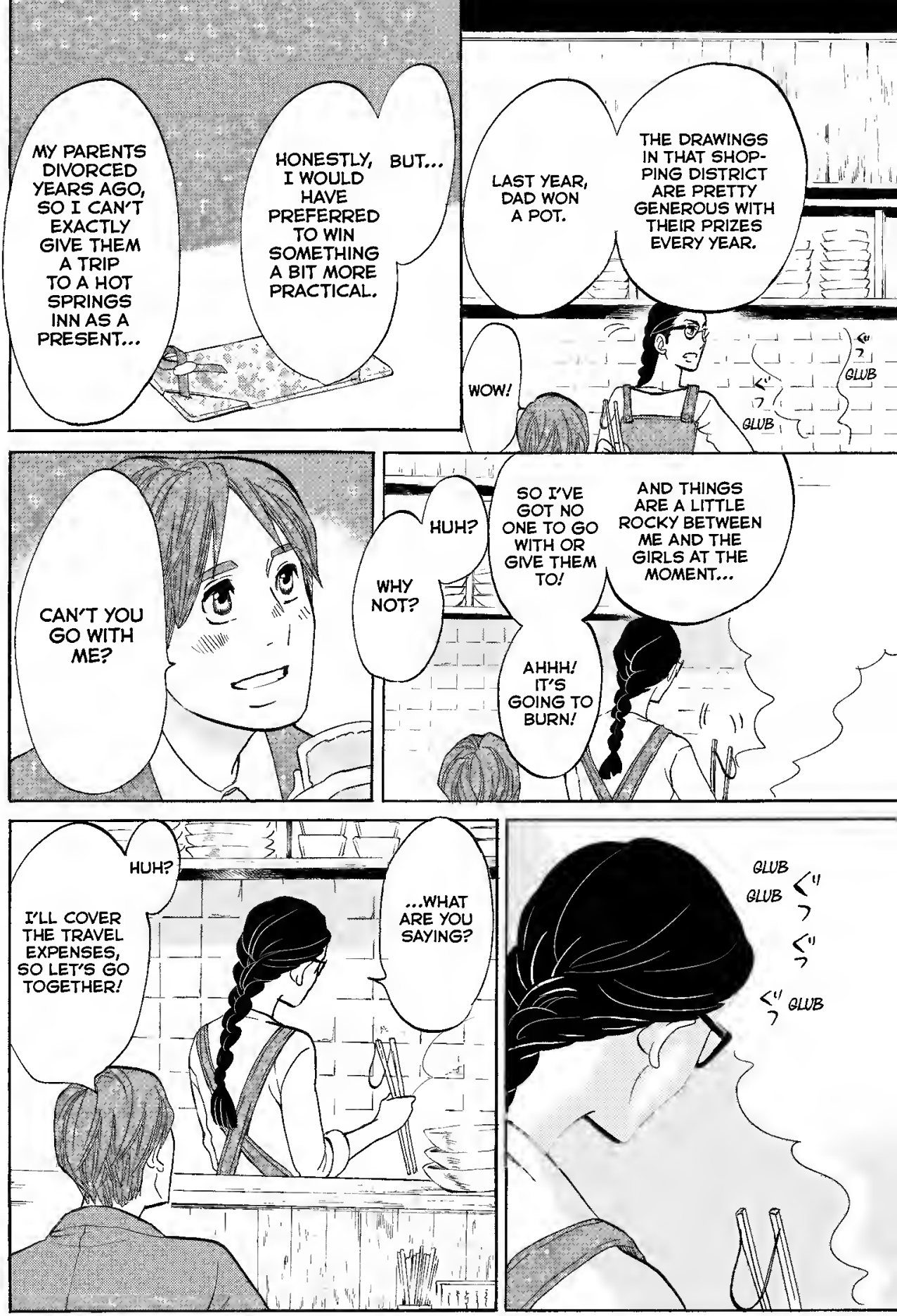
YOU'VE WON A FIRST-CLASS TRIP FOR TWO TO HAKONE!!
WE HAVE A WINNER !!
ガラガラ
CLANG-A-CLANG

OH!
福引

CONGRATULATIONS!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG-A-CLANG
福引
DRAWING

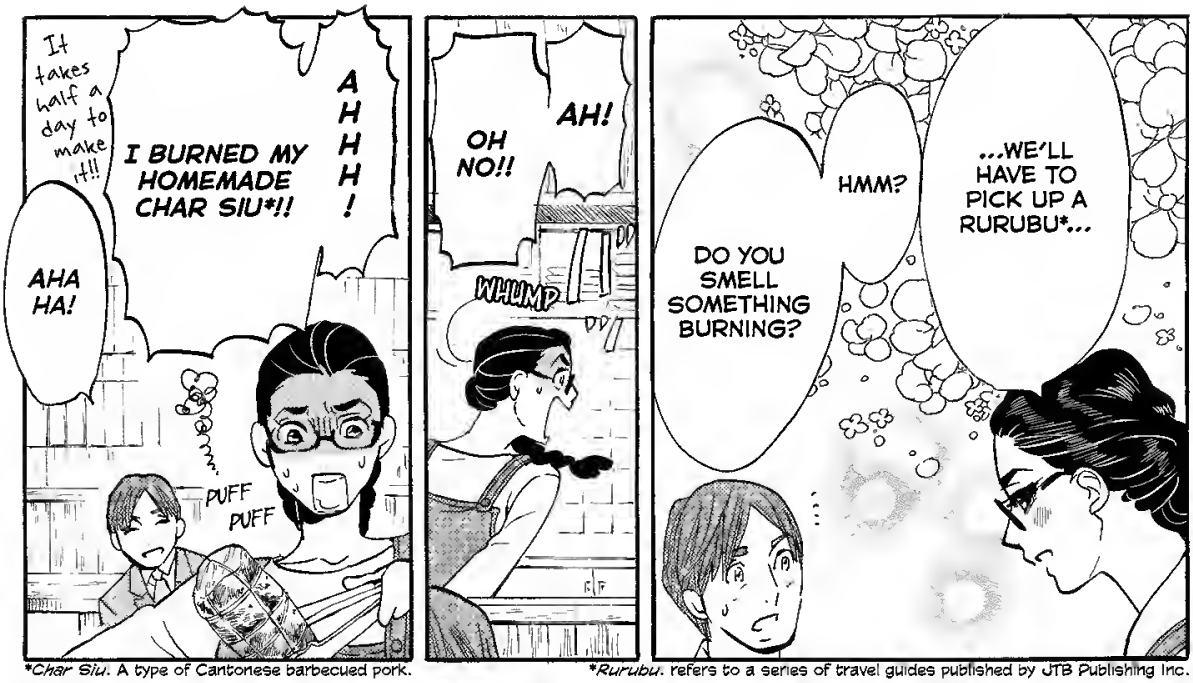
WHAT?!
YOU WON THE GRAND PRIZE?! THAT'S AMAZING!

お気軽に
支度中
PREPARING FOR BUSINESS


MY PARENTS DIVORCED YEARS AGO, SO I CAN'T EXACTLY GIVE THEM A TRIP TO A HOT SPRINGS INN AS A PRESENT...
HONESTLY, BUT... I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO WIN SOMETHING A BIT MORE PRACTICAL.
LAST YEAR, DAD WON A POT.
THE DRAWINGS IN THAT SHOPPING DISTRICT ARE PRETTY GENEROUS WITH THEIR PRIZES EVERY YEAR.
WOW!
GLUB
GLUB
CAN'T YOU GO WITH ME?
HUH?
WHY NOT?
SO I'VE GOT NO ONE TO GO WITH OR GIVE THEM TO!
AND THINGS ARE A LITTLE ROCKY BETWEEN ME AND THE GIRLS AT THE MOMENT...
AHHH! IT'S GOING TO BURN!
HUH?
I'LL COVER THE TRAVEL EXPENSES, SO LET'S GO TOGETHER!
...WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB

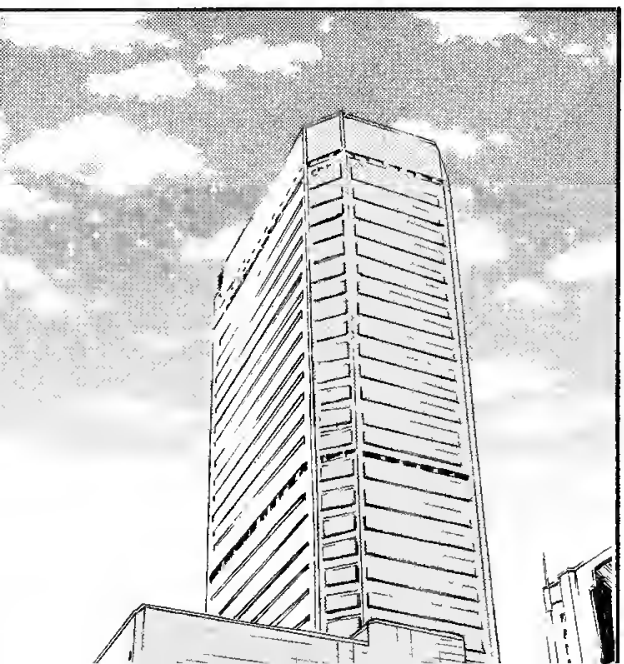
YOU KNOW WE CAN'T...
WHAT IF YOUR WIFE FOUND OUT?
DON'T WORRY. SHE WON'T FIND OUT.
IN FACT...
THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW TIMES WE COULD DO SOMETHING SO BIG.
I WANT TO GO...
...TO THE HOT SPRINGS WITH YOU.
JUST THINK OF THIS AS A GIFT TO US FROM GOD...
AND LET'S GO.

IT'S NOT REALLY OUT OF THE QUESTION.
...
CLENCH ぎゅっ…
OR IS THAT...
...OUT OF THE QUESTION?
ALL RIGHT!
SO LET'S GO, KOYUKI!!
THIS WEEKEND !!
I KNOW, RIGHT?!
HAKONE'S PRETTY CLOSE, RIGHT?!
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S A TRIP TO HAWAII TOGETHER.
I MEAN, IT'S ONLY A ONE NIGHT STAY IN HAKONE...
TWITCH ピクッ
A ROAD-TRIP...
YEAH, IN A CAR WE CAN TALK ALL ALONE!
...
I THINK A CAR WOULD BE BEST.
WE CAN DRIVE THERE ON A LITTLE ROAD TRIP, SEEING THE SIGHTS!
OH, OR SHOULD WE TAKE A RENTAL CAR?
SHOULD I BOOK A ROMANCE-CAR TRAIN RIDE?
HUH ?!



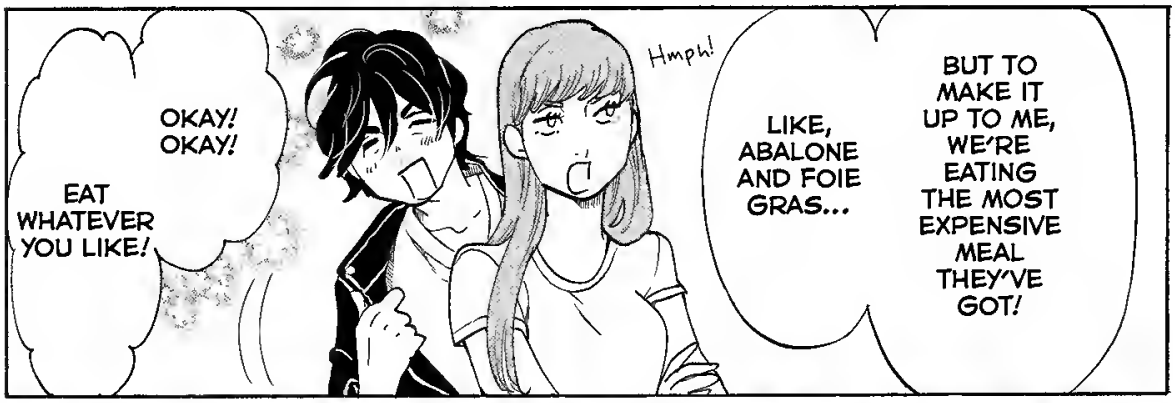
*Char Siu. A type of Cantonese barbecued pork.

*Rurubu. refers to a series of travel guides published by JTB Publishing Inc.

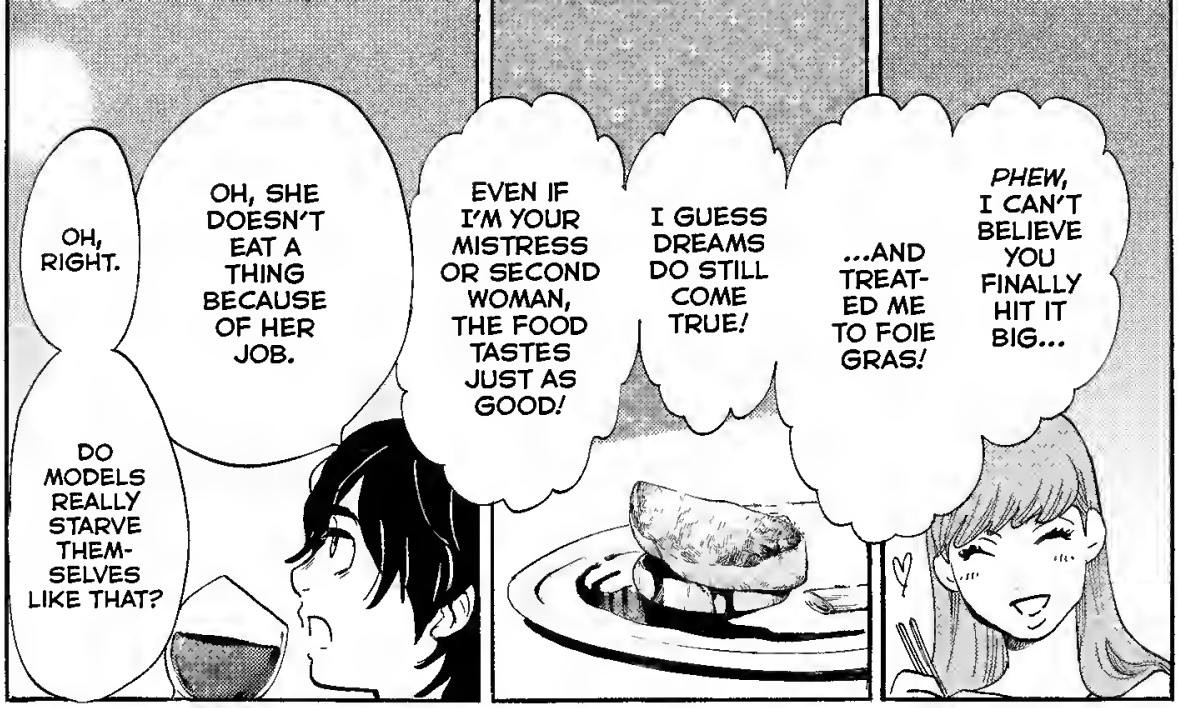


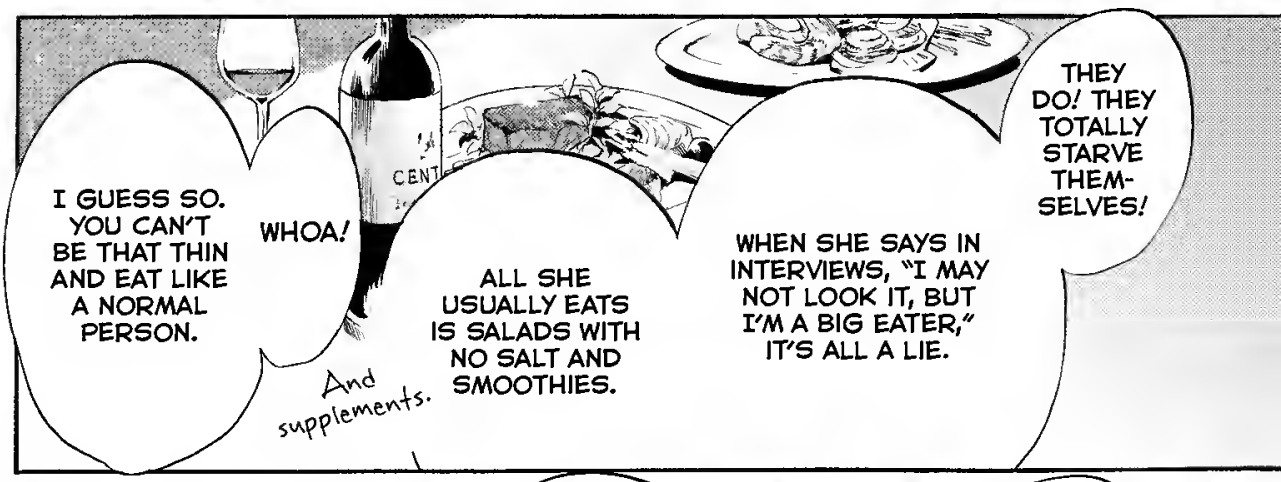
KAORI!
WOO-HOO!! I GOT ANOTHER RAISE!!
HUH?!
OUR NEWEST ALBUM'S BEEN SELLING PRETTY WELL AND WE'RE BRINGING IN BIGGER AUDIENCES TO OUR SHOWS...
...SO ALL THE BAND MEMBERS ARE GETTING A RAISE ON THEIR SALARY!
HUH? MUSICIANS ARE SALARIED WORKERS?
YOU'RE KIND OF CRUSHING MY DREAMS HERE...
ALL THE BIG RECORD COMPANIES ARE LIKE THAT! THERE MAY BE NO DREAMS IN IT, BUT THERE'S STABILITY!!
HUH.
WELL, I GUESS THAT'S HOW YOU HAVE THIS GREAT APARTMENT.
BUM!
KAORI!!
LET'S GO OUT FOR DINNER!!
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT?! LET'S CELEBRATE MY RAISE!!
HUH?! HOORAY! I'M SO GLAD!

THEN LET'S EAT TEPPANYAKI!!
ALL RIGHT!!
I'M STARVING!! LET'S GO!!
OH, BUT BEFORE WE LEAVE, MAKE SURE YOU HAVEN'T DROPPED AN EARRING OR ANYTHING ON THE FLOOR.
SORRY, BUT IT HAS TO BE DONE.
I KNOW! I KNOW!
YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S COMING TOMORROW, RIGHT?
HEH HEH...

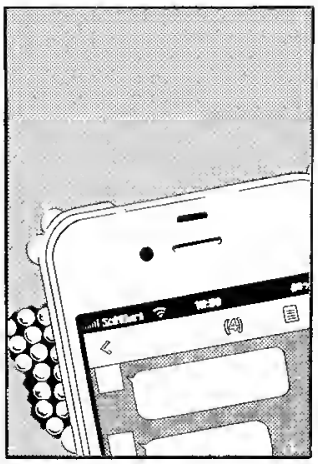

BUT TO MAKE IT UP TO ME, WE'RE EATING THE MOST EXPENSIVE MEAL THEY'VE GOT!
LIKE, ABALONE AND FOIE GRAS...
Hmph!
OKAY! OKAY!
EAT WHATEVER YOU LIKE!

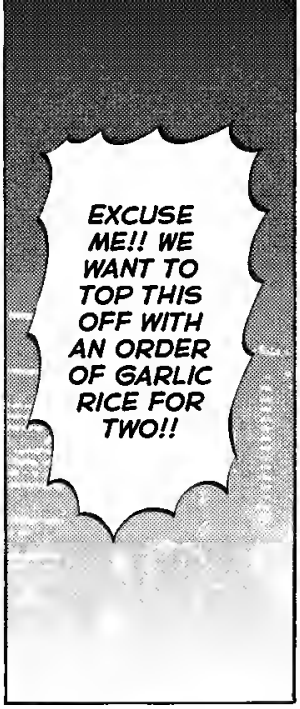
SIZZLE
SIZZLE
MM! THAT'S GOOD STUFF! ♡
I'M IN HEAVEN! ♡
RIGHT?
AND WHEN WE WERE YOUNG, WE ATE NOTHING BUT CUP RAMEN TOGETHER...


PHEW, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU FINALLY HIT IT BIG...
...AND TREATED ME TO FOIE GRAS!
I GUESS DREAMS DO STILL COME TRUE!
EVEN IF I'M YOUR MISTRESS OR SECOND WOMAN, THE FOOD TASTES JUST AS GOOD!
OH, SHE DOESN'T EAT A THING BECAUSE OF HER JOB.
OH, RIGHT.
DO MODELS REALLY STARVE THEMSELVES LIKE THAT?

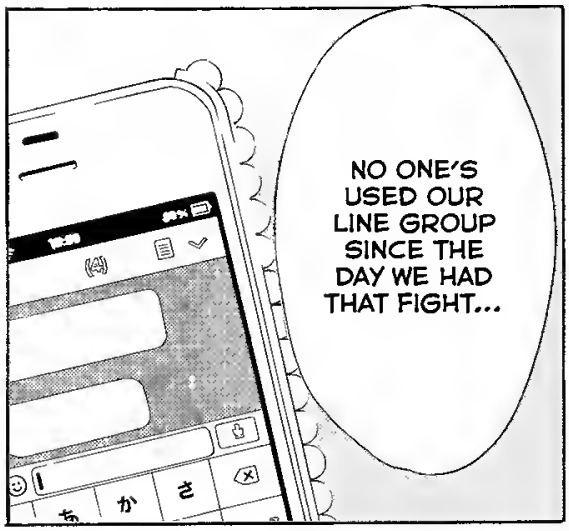

THEY DO! THEY TOTALLY STARVE THEMSELVES!
WHEN SHE SAYS IN INTERVIEWS, "I MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT I'M A BIG EATER," IT'S ALL A LIE.
ALL SHE USUALLY EATS IS SALADS WITH NO SALT AND SMOOTHIES.
And supplements.
WHOA!
I GUESS SO. YOU CAN'T BE THAT THIN AND EAT LIKE A NORMAL PERSON.

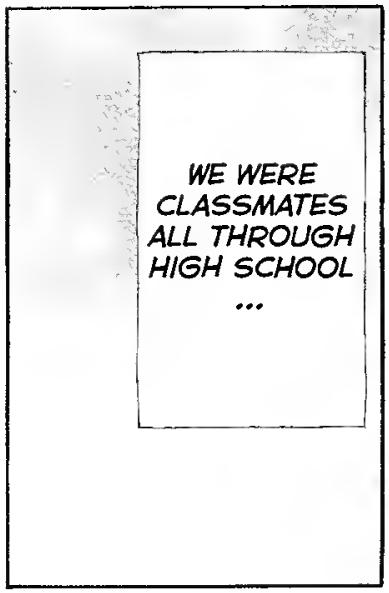
IT'S A HUNDRED TIMES MORE FUN EATING WITH YOU INSTEAD, KAORI.
YEAH.
THEN EVEN NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT A RAISE, SHE WON'T GO OUT TO EAT WITH YOU? HOW BORING!



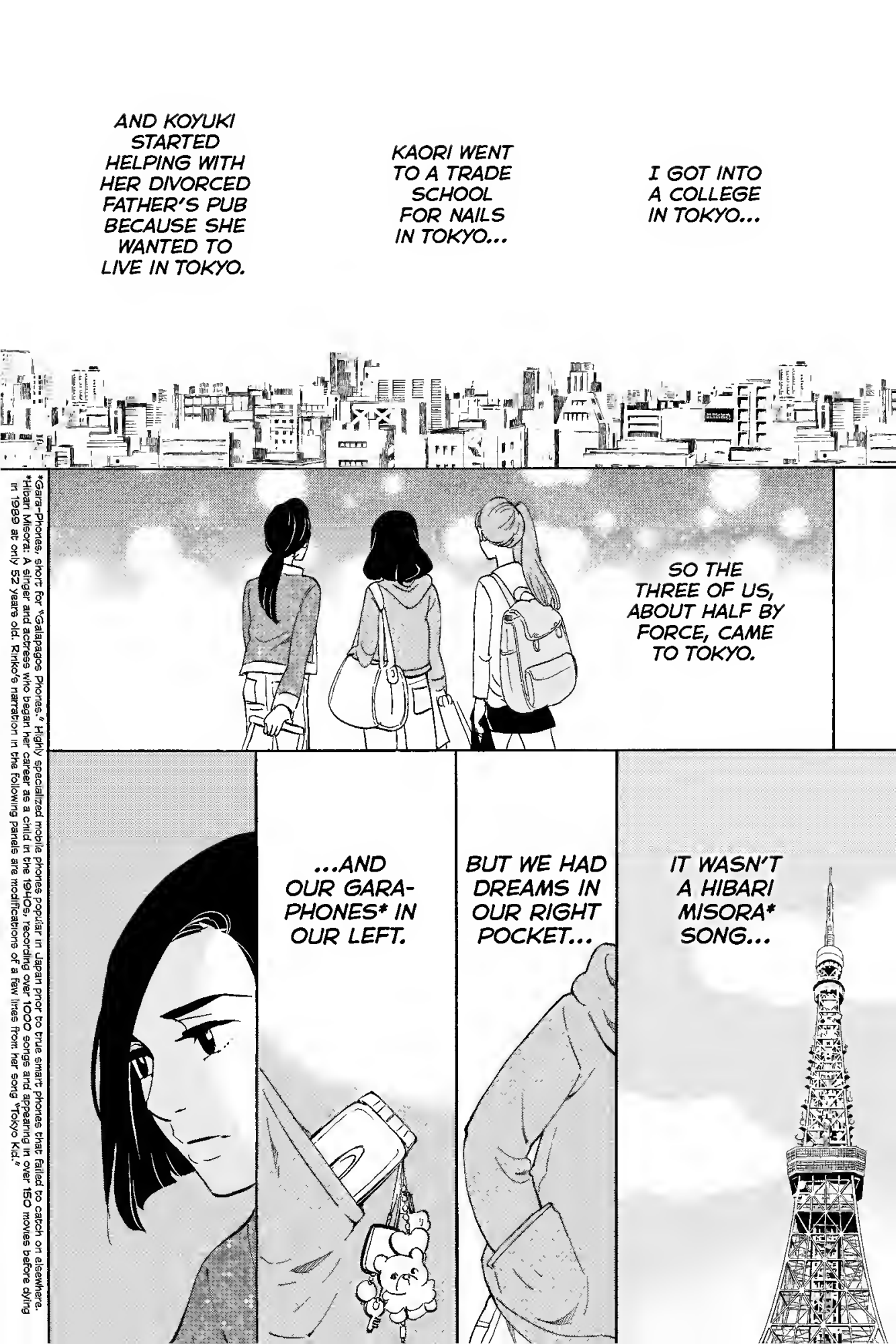

EXCUSE ME!! WE WANT TO TOP THIS OFF WITH AN ORDER OF GARLIC RICE FOR TWO!!

YEAH!! EVEN IF I GET FAT, IT WON'T AFFECT MY JOB!!
ALL RIGHT!! DIG IN, KAORI!!
CHOMP CHOMP


NO ONE'S USED OUR LINE GROUP SINCE THE DAY WE HAD THAT FIGHT...


WE WERE CLASSMATES ALL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL ...

I CAN'T LET IT GO ON LIKE THIS...
SIGH...
PLOP


AND KOYUKI STARTED HELPING WITH HER DIVORCED FATHER'S PUB BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO LIVE IN TOKYO.
KAORI WENT TO A TRADE SCHOOL FOR NAILS IN TOKYO...
I GOT INTO A COLLEGE IN TOKYO...
SO THE THREE OF US, ABOUT HALF BY FORCE, CAME TO TOKYO.
...AND OUR GARA-PHONES* IN OUR LEFT.
BUT WE HAD DREAMS IN OUR RIGHT POCKET...
IT WASN'T A HIBARI MISORA* SONG...

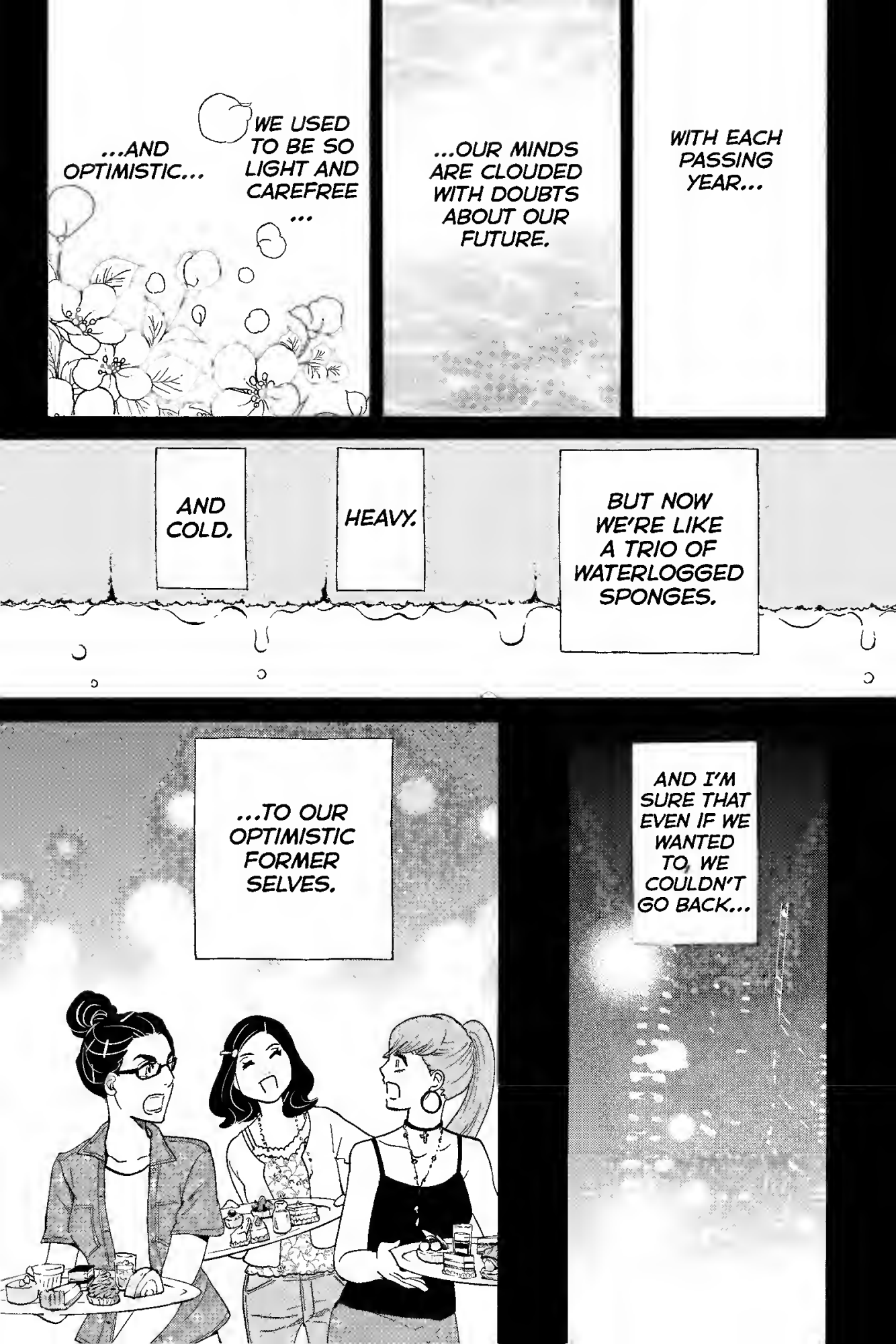
*Gara-Phones: short for "Galapagos Phones." Highly specialized mobile phones popular in Japan prior to true smart phones that failed to catch on elsewhere.

*Hibari Misora: A singer and actress who began her career as a child in the 1940s, recording over 1000 songs and appearing in over 150 movies before dying in 1989 at only 52 years old. Rinko's narration in the following panels are modifications of a few lines from her song "Tokyo Kid."

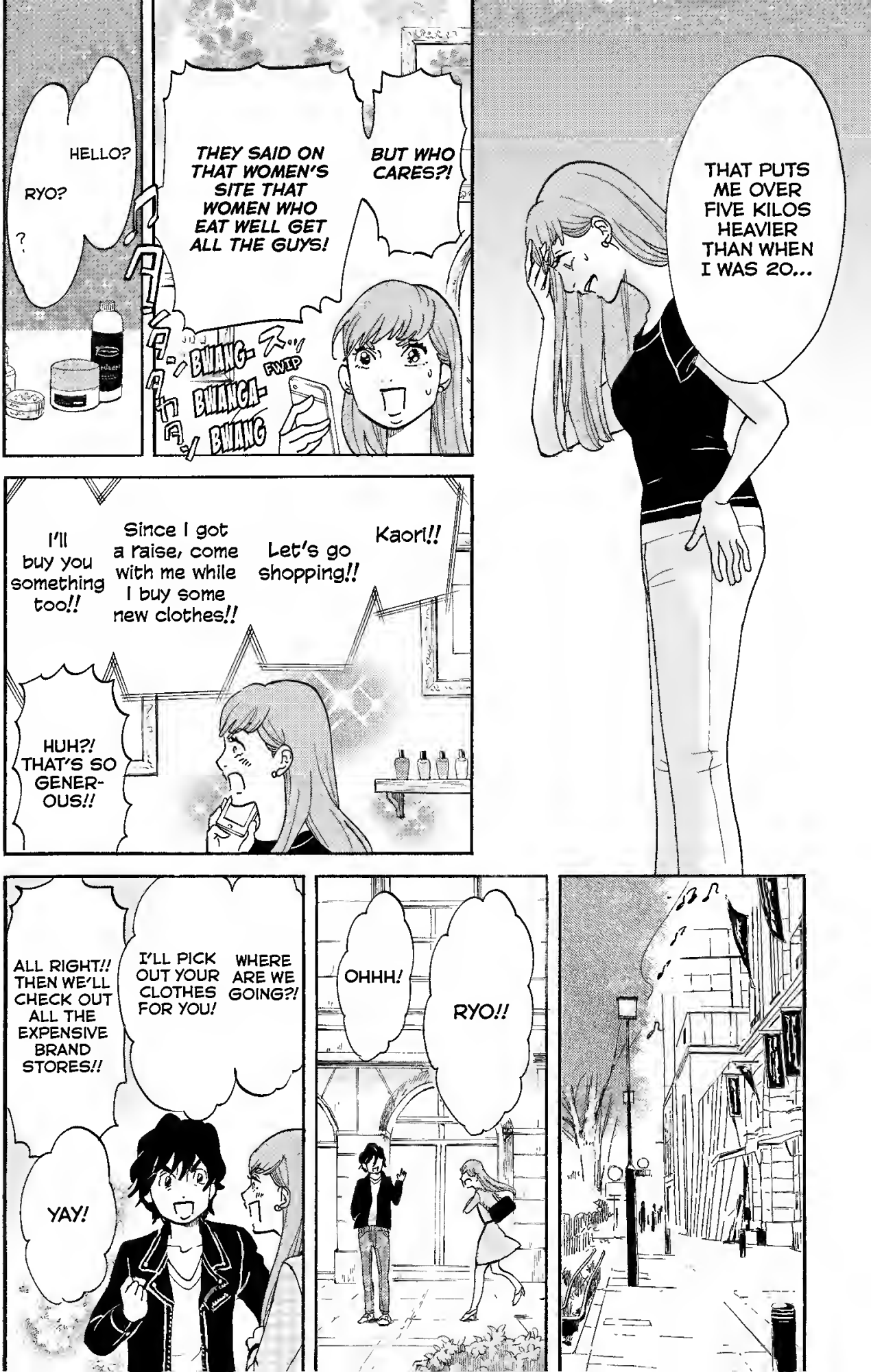
BACK WHEN WE WERE 18, WE WERE SWELLING WITH HOPES AND DREAMS.
MAYBE WE GOT INTO ARGUMENTS ...
...BUT THEY WERE SMALL ONES.
THEY NEVER BROUGHT DOWN THE MOOD LIKE IT DID THIS TIME.
IT'S HEAVY.
EVERY-THING FEELS HEAVY.
I WANT THINGS TO GO MORE LIGHTLY...

...HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH SOMETHING HEAVY.
IT FEELS LIKE ALL THOSE HOPES AND DREAMS...
IN THE 15 YEARS SINCE...
...NO, NOT ANY OF THOSE...
RESIGNATION?
COMPROMISE?
PRIDE? VANITY?
WHAT IS IT?
IT'S PROBABLY ...

DOUBT.


...AND OPTIMISTIC...
WE USED TO BE SO LIGHT AND CAREFREE ...
...OUR MINDS ARE CLOUDED WITH DOUBTS ABOUT OUR FUTURE.
WITH EACH PASSING YEAR...
AND COLD.
HEAVY.
BUT NOW WE'RE LIKE A TRIO OF WATERLOGGED SPONGES.
...TO OUR OPTIMISTIC FORMER SELVES.
AND I'M SURE THAT EVEN IF WE WANTED TO, WE COULDN'T GO BACK...

今月の新刊コーナー
THAT WILL BE XXXX YEN.
RURUBU
HAKONE
書店
BOOKS
ウィーン
WHRRR
WHOA!
I GAINED A KILO!
Nail Salon


HELLO?
RYO?
?
THEY SAID ON THAT WOMEN'S SITE THAT WOMEN WHO EAT WELL GET ALL THE GUYS!
BUT WHO CARES?!
BWANG-
FWIP
BWANGA-
BWANG
THAT PUTS ME OVER FIVE KILOS HEAVIER THAN WHEN I WAS 20...
I'll buy you something too!!
Since I got a raise, come with me while I buy some new clothes!!
Let's go shopping!!
Kaori!!
HUH?! THAT'S SO GENER-OUS!!
ALL RIGHT!! THEN WE'LL CHECK OUT ALL THE EXPENSIVE BRAND STORES!!
I'LL PICK OUT YOUR CLOTHES FOR YOU!
WHERE ARE WE GOING?!
YAY!
OHHH!
RYO!!

HUH! YOU THREE ARE GOING ON ANOTHER TRIP ALONE, EH?
Yeesh...
I'M SPENDING THE NIGHT IN HAKONE WITH THE GIRLS.
OH...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING IN THAT FANCY GETUP?
OH!
酒処
PUB
Will in front of the Uniqlo on Meiji Road be okay?
You're picking me up by car, right?
PINK
TMP
TMP
TMP
THE PUB'S CLOSED TOMOR-ROW, SO WHERE'S THE PROBLEM?
DON'T DRINK TOO MUCH!!
ピロリ～ン
JING-A-LING

Marui

Sorry.
My wife's health took a turn for the worse, so she was emergency admitted to the hospital.

Apparently, it's that pregnancy-induced hypertension that happens with a lot of pregnancies…

ピロリ～ン JING-A-LING

But I've gotta rush down to her parents' place right now…

ピロリ～ン JING-A-LING

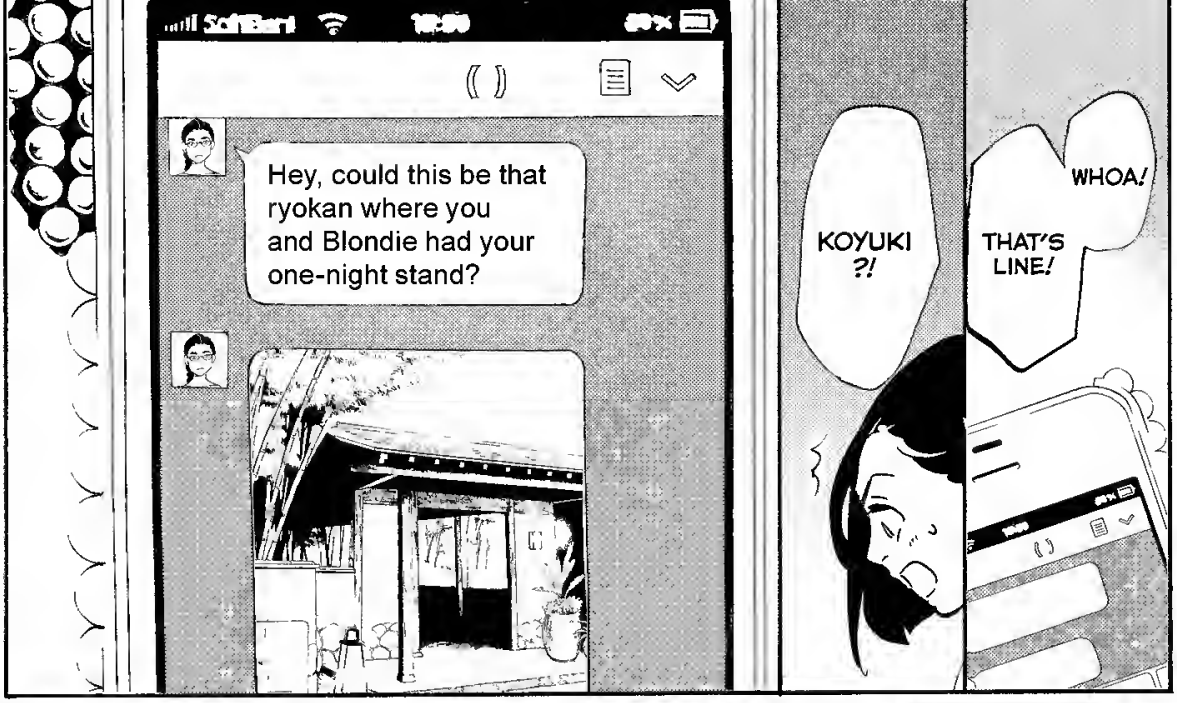
Sorry!!
Let's postpone it!!
I'll call you tonight!!

I'm really sorry, Koyuki!!

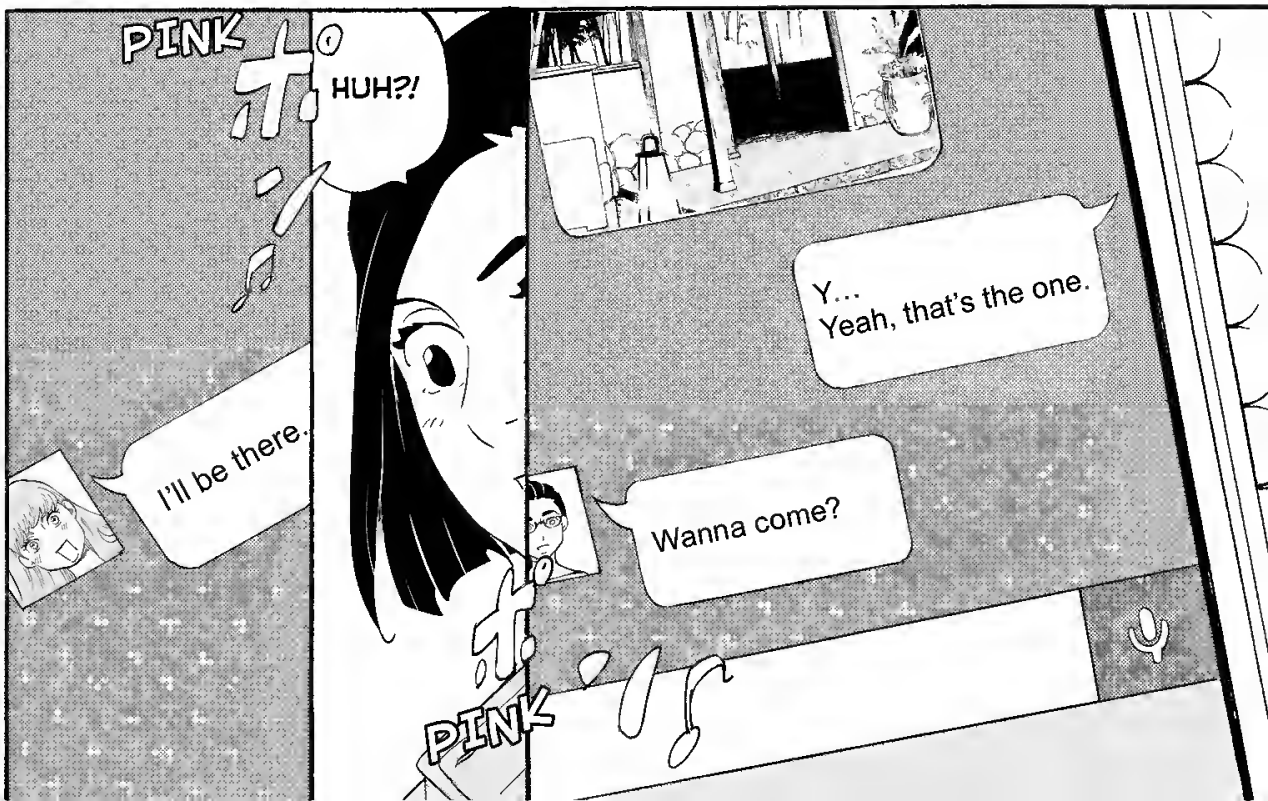
...are you angry?
...are you angry?
PINK
I'm not angry.
PINK
CAN'T DO NOTHIN' ABOUT IT.

PHEW!
I SURE BOUGHT A LOT!
YAY! AND YOU EVEN BOUGHT ME A COAT TOO! HOW LUCKY!
BOOM
BOOM
OH.
I JUST REMEMBERED THERE'S ONE MORE THING I WANNA BUY, KAORI.
HUH?!
WHAT IS IT?
OH.
I BET THEY SELL THEM HERE.
HUH?!
HUH?!
DRUGS
HERE!
HERE THEY ARE! RIGHT HERE!

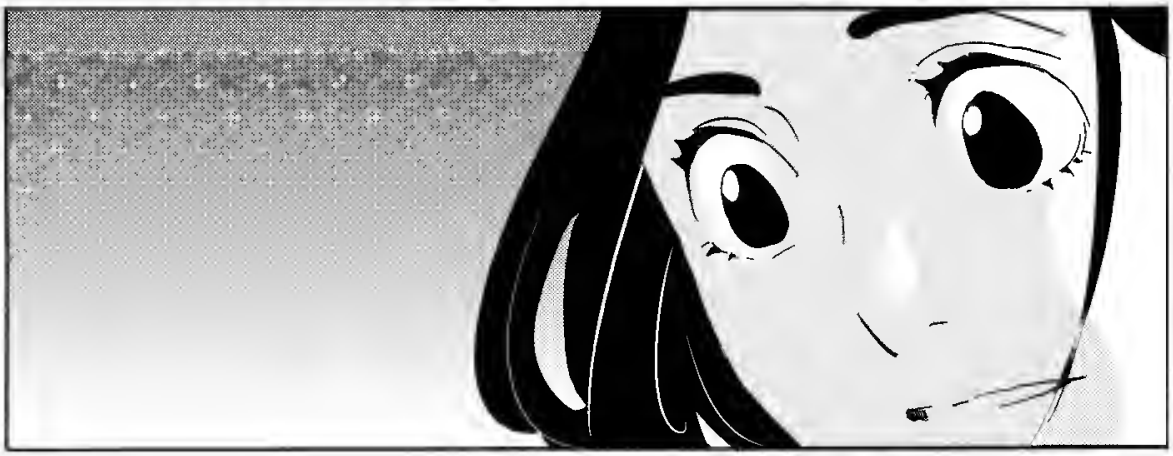
WITH ONE OF THESE, WE CAN GET UP ALL OF YOUR HAIR EASY, RIGHT?
SIGH...
WHAT'M I GONNA DO FOR DINNER?
I'M REALLY IN THE MOOD FOR A HIGHBALL AND BEER SNACKS AT NONBEE, BUT THAT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION...
OH WELL... I'LL JUST GRAB SOMETHING HERE.
CONVEYOR SUSHI
JING-A-LING
HMM?

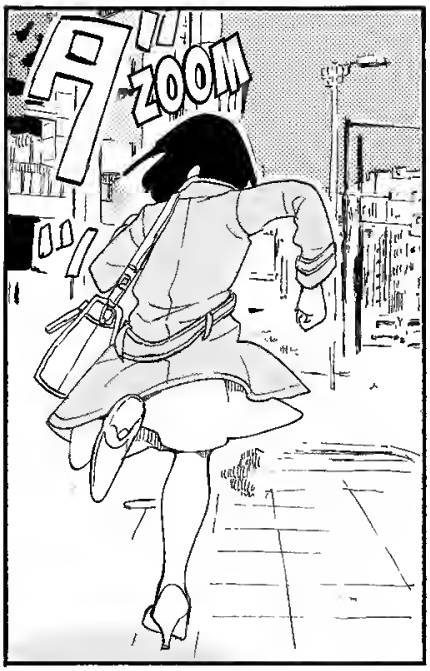

Hey, could this be that ryokan where you and Blondie had your one-night stand?
KOYUKI ?!
WHOA! THAT'S LINE!

HOW'D SHE FIND OUT?
H-
HUH?
Y... Yeah, that's


PINK
HUH?!
I'll be there.
Y... Yeah, that's the one.
Wanna come?
PINK

Wanna come?
I'll be there.
I'll be right there.
Wait for me with booze on.

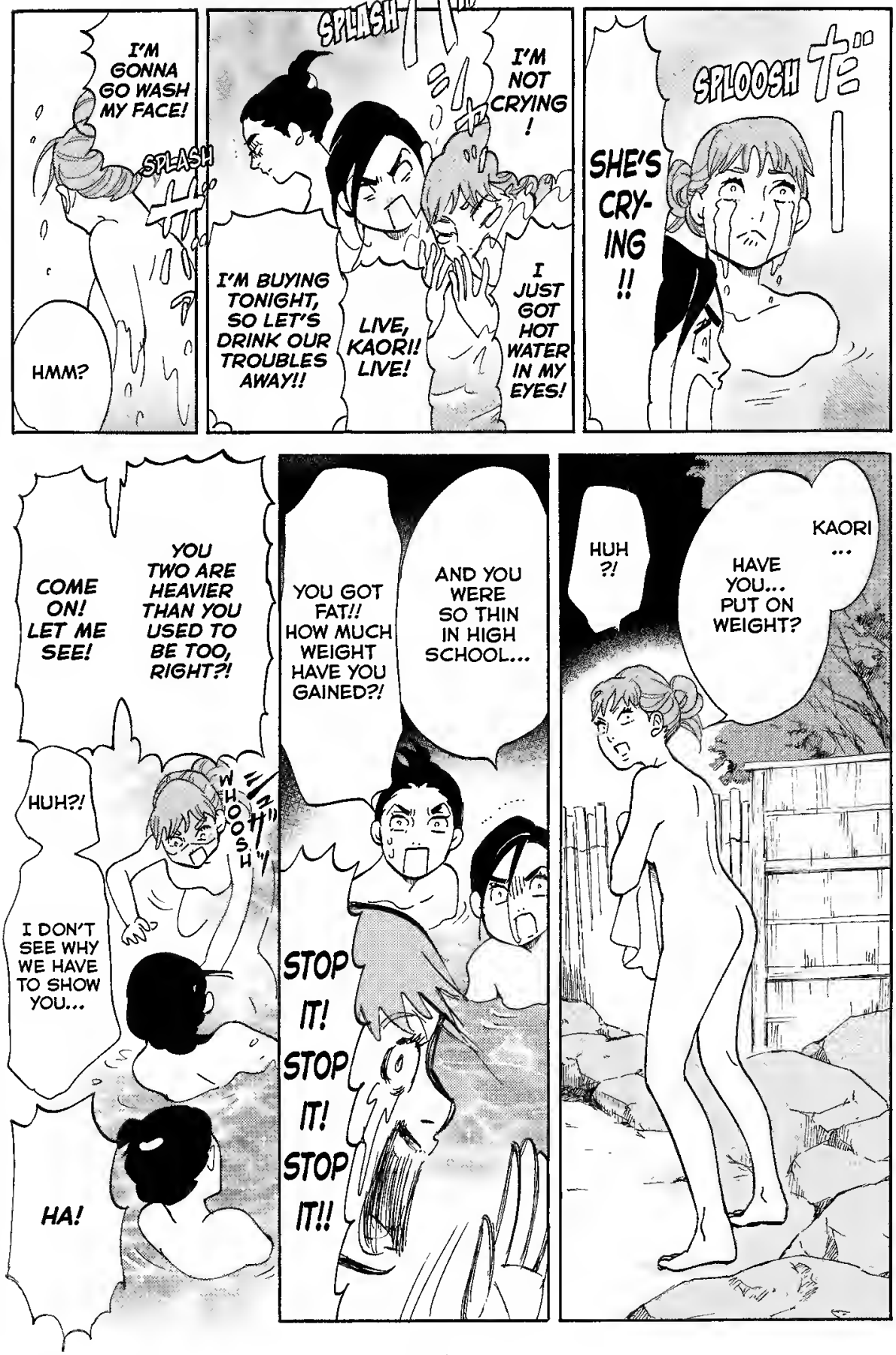


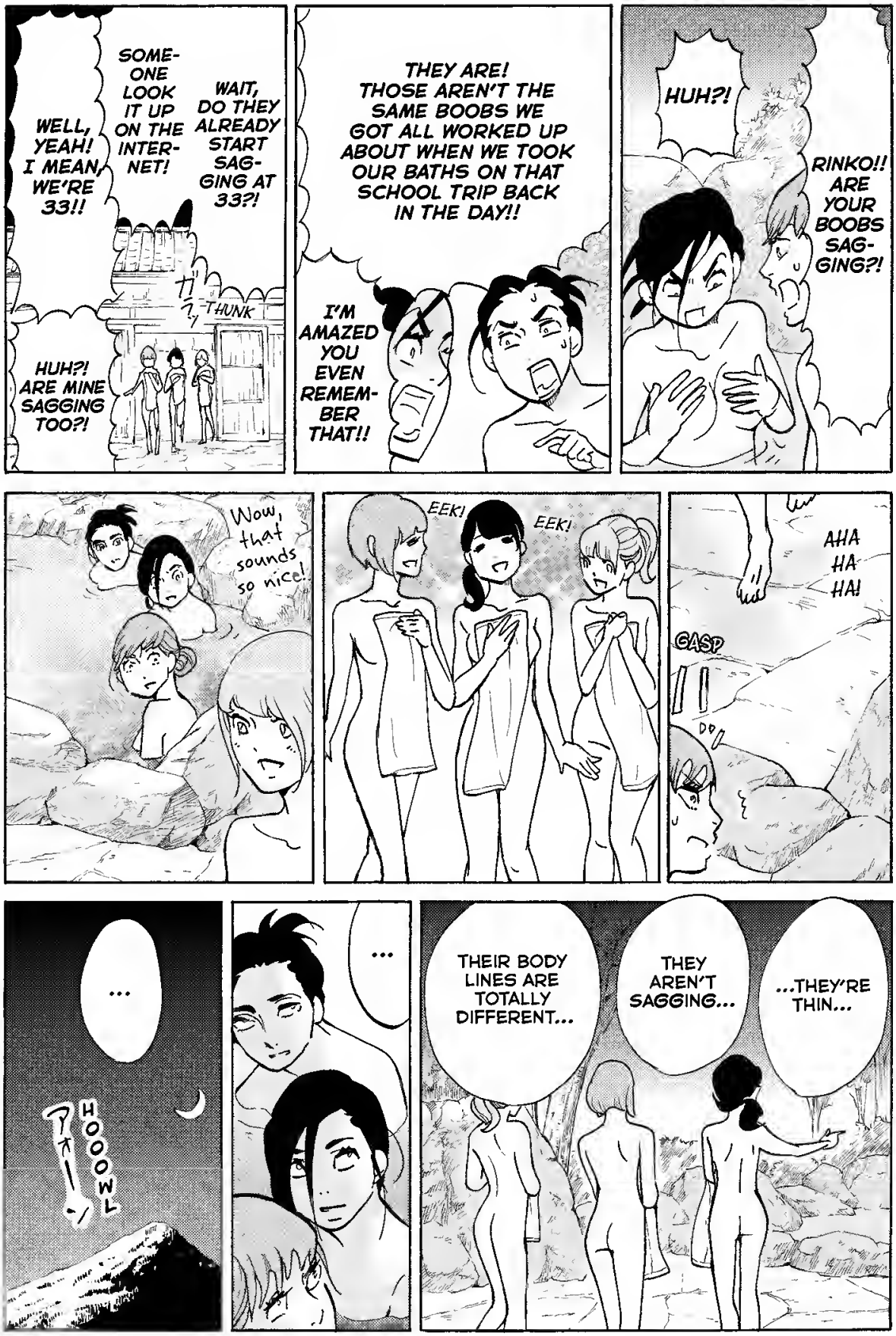

ZOOM

MR. MARUI CANCELED ON ME AT THE LAST MINUTE.
山廃仕込
純米酒
天狗舞
HUH?!
HUUUH?!
HIS WIFE WAS RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL.
CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
FWIP

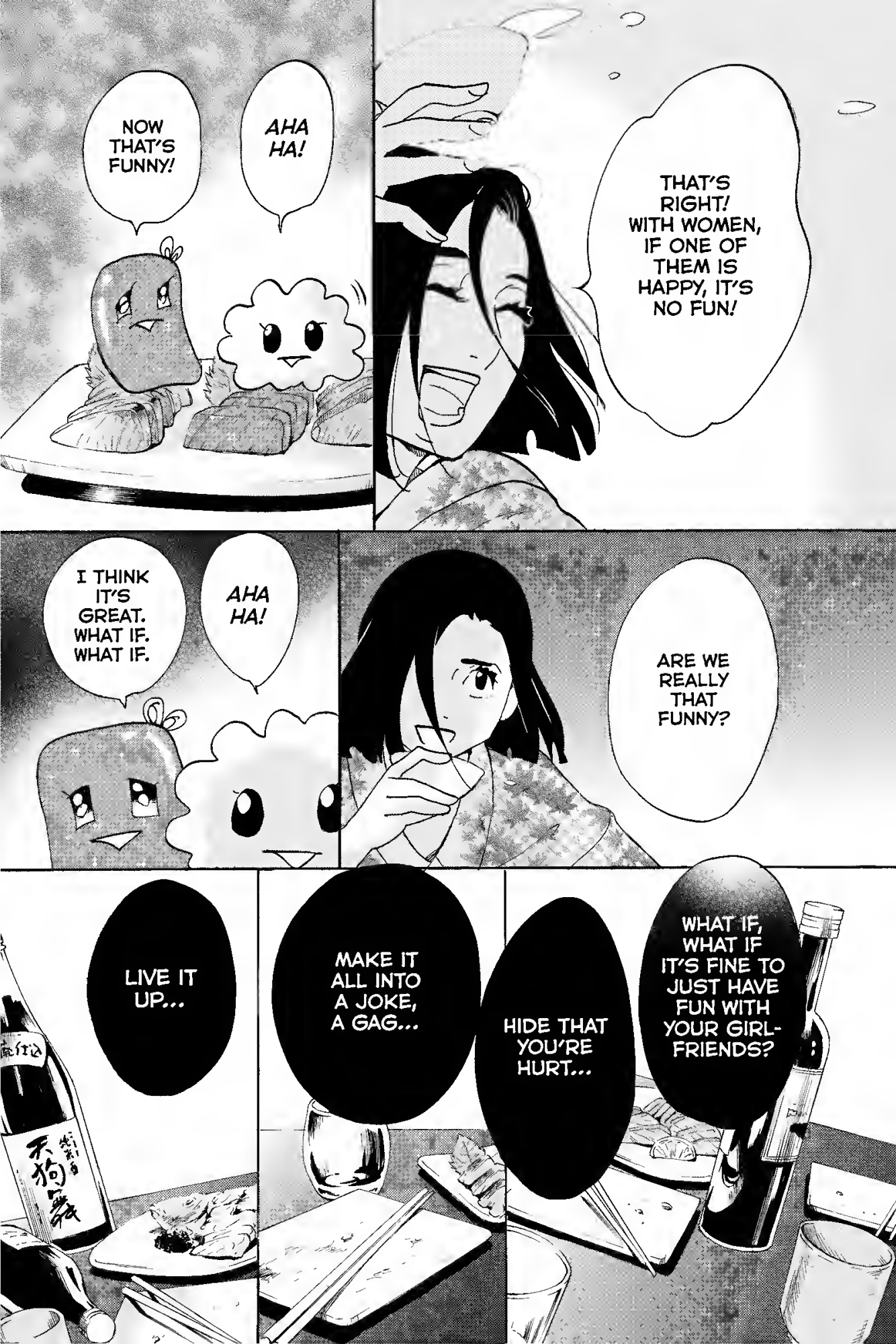
WELL, WHY DON'T WE HEAD TO THE BATHS?
YEAH, I SUPPOSE SO.
YEAH.
HE'S KIND OF A PIECE OF SHIT, HUH?
SPLISH
チャプン…
…
MAN…

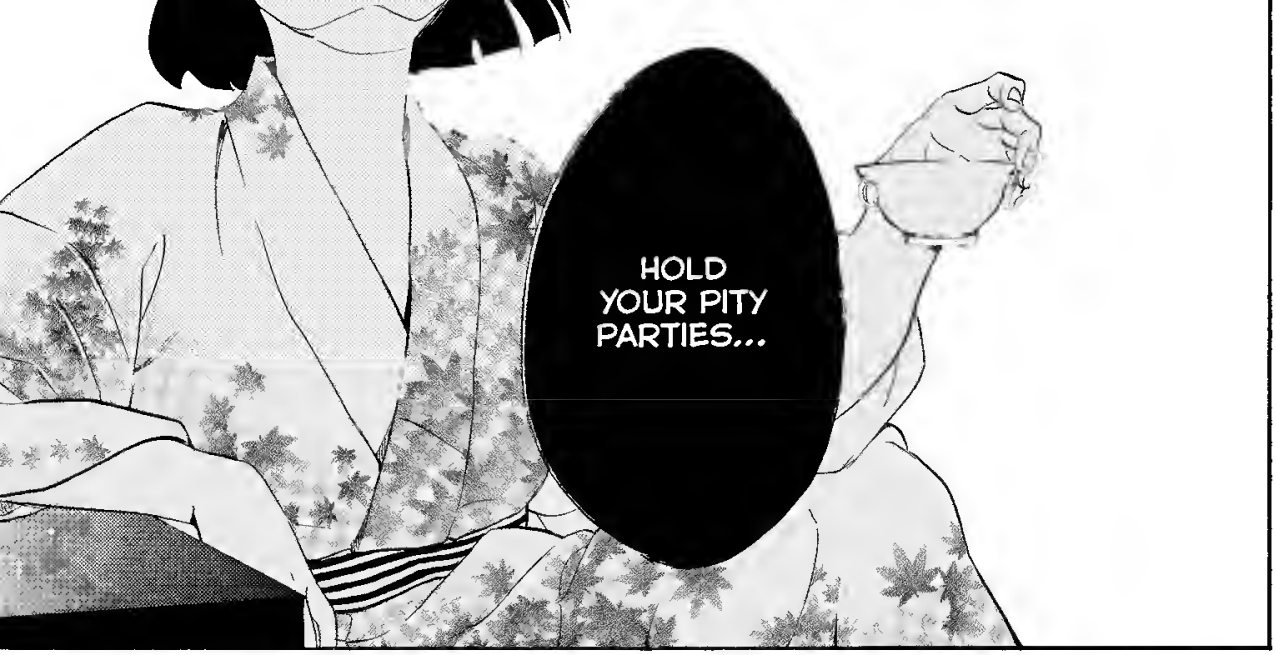
THESE THINGS ARE BOUND TO HAPPEN WHEN YOU'RE SEEING A MARRIED MAN.
THAT'S WHY I SAID THAT THE OTHER DAY.
Stop the cheating, and such.
BUT... I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I?
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU'RE COMPLETELY RIGHT.
SPLISH
SORRY.
HUH?! WHAT WAS IT? WHAT HAPPENED?
IN A WAY THAT ONLY COMES WITH BEING SOMEONE'S "SECOND" WOMAN.
BUT, YOU KNOW, I GOT IT PRETTY AWFUL EARLIER TOO.
RYO GAVE ME A LINT ROLLER AS A GIFT AND TOLD ME TO CLEAN UP MY HAIR WITH IT AND LEAVE.
HOW AWFUL!!
WHAT THE HELL?! THAT'S SUPER SHITTY!! HE'S A FIRST CLASS PIECE OF SHIT!!
HE WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!!


I'M GONNA GO WASH MY FACE!
SPLASH
HMM?
SPLASH
I'M NOT CRYING!
I'M BUYING TONIGHT, SO LET'S DRINK OUR TROUBLES AWAY!!
LIVE, KAORI!! LIVE!
I JUST GOT HOT WATER IN MY EYES!
SPLOOSH
SHE'S CRY-ING!!
KAORI...
HUH?!
HAVE YOU... PUT ON WEIGHT?
AND YOU WERE SO THIN IN HIGH SCHOOL...
YOU GOT FAT!! HOW MUCH WEIGHT HAVE YOU GAINED?!
STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP IT!!
COME ON! LET ME SEE!
YOU TWO ARE HEAVIER THAN YOU USED TO BE TOO, RIGHT?!
HUH?!
WHOOSH
I DON'T SEE WHY WE HAVE TO SHOW YOU...
HA!


WELL, YEAH! I MEAN, WE'RE 33!!
SOMEONE LOOK IT UP ON THE INTERNET!
WAIT, DO THEY ALREADY START SAGGING AT 33?!
ガラッ
THUNK
HUH?! ARE MINE SAGGING TOO?!
THEY ARE! THOSE AREN'T THE SAME BOOBS WE GOT ALL WORKED UP ABOUT WHEN WE TOOK OUR BATHS ON THAT SCHOOL TRIP BACK IN THE DAY!!
I'M AMAZED YOU EVEN REMEMBER THAT!!
HUH?!
RINKO!! ARE YOUR BOOBS SAGGING?!
Wow, that sounds so nice!
EEK!
EEK!
AHA HA HA!
GASP
DD
...
...
HOOOWL
アオーン
THEIR BODY LINES ARE TOTALLY DIFFERENT...
THEY AREN'T SAGGING...
...THEY'RE THIN...

BOOM
天狗舞
THIS IS THE SAKE WE DRANK THAT NIGHT BLONDIE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF ME.
Hup!
That's your Rinko trivia!
LET'S DRINK THIS BAS-TARD!
ALL RIGHT!
WE'LL AVENGE YOU!
RISE
RISE
AHA HA HA!
CHEERS!!
LEAVE THE LINT ROLLER !!
AND NOW, TO THE PIECE OF SHIT-FILLED CITY OF TOKYO...
BRAGGING ABOUT HOW BAD THEY'VE GOT IT?
AHA HA!
THINGS GO BEST BETWEEN WOMEN WHEN THEY'RE BRAGGING ABOUT HOW BAD THEY'VE GOT IT! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
WHAT IF, WHAT IF IT'S A RELIEF YOU MADE UP WITH EACH OTHER?
HOP
HOP
HOP


NOW THAT'S FUNNY!
AHA HA!
THAT'S RIGHT! WITH WOMEN, IF ONE OF THEM IS HAPPY, IT'S NO FUN!
I THINK IT'S GREAT. WHAT IF. WHAT IF.
AHA HA!
ARE WE REALLY THAT FUNNY?
LIVE IT UP...
MAKE IT ALL INTO A JOKE, A GAG...
HIDE THAT YOU'RE HURT...
WHAT IF, WHAT IF IT'S FINE TO JUST HAVE FUN WITH YOUR GIRL-FRIENDS?


HOLD YOUR PITY PARTIES...

LAUGH...

WHAT IF, WHAT IF THAT'S ONE WAY TO LIVE YOUR LIFE?

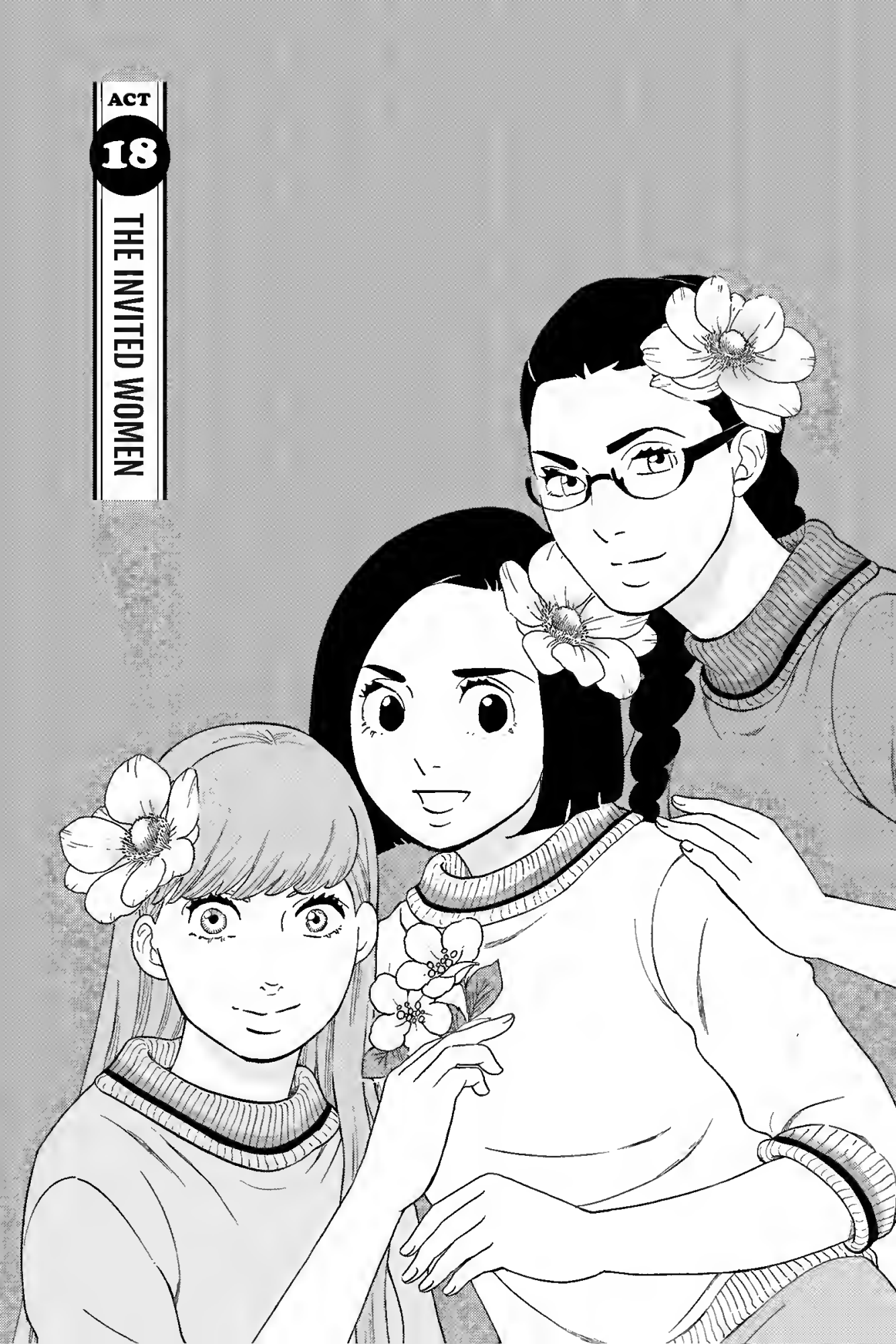
YEP!
WHAT IF, WHAT IF THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU THE TOKYO TARAREBA GIRLS?!

EVEN THEIR SONGS ARE FUN, THE TOKYO TARAREBA GIRLS!
HA HA!

...AND THEIR SMART PHONES IN THEIR LEFT.
WITH WORRIES IN THEIR RIGHT POCKETS...

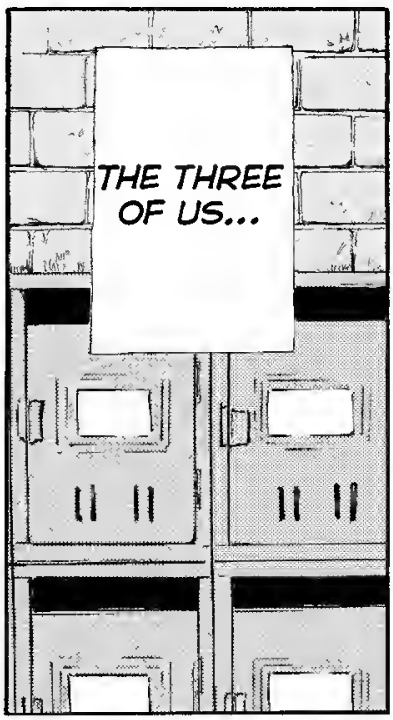
ACT 18

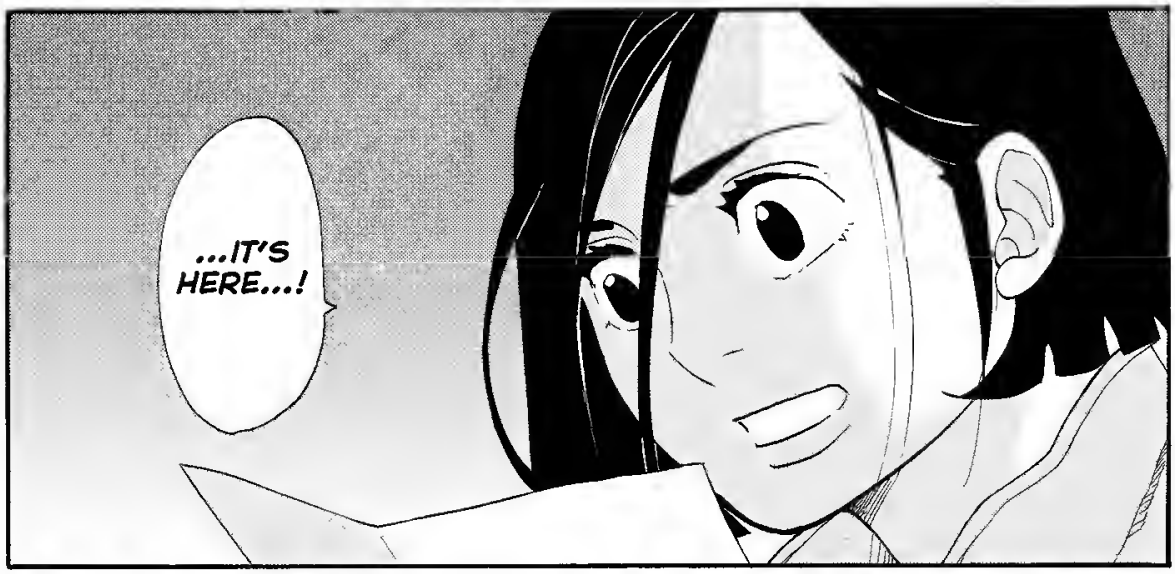
THE INVITED WOMEN



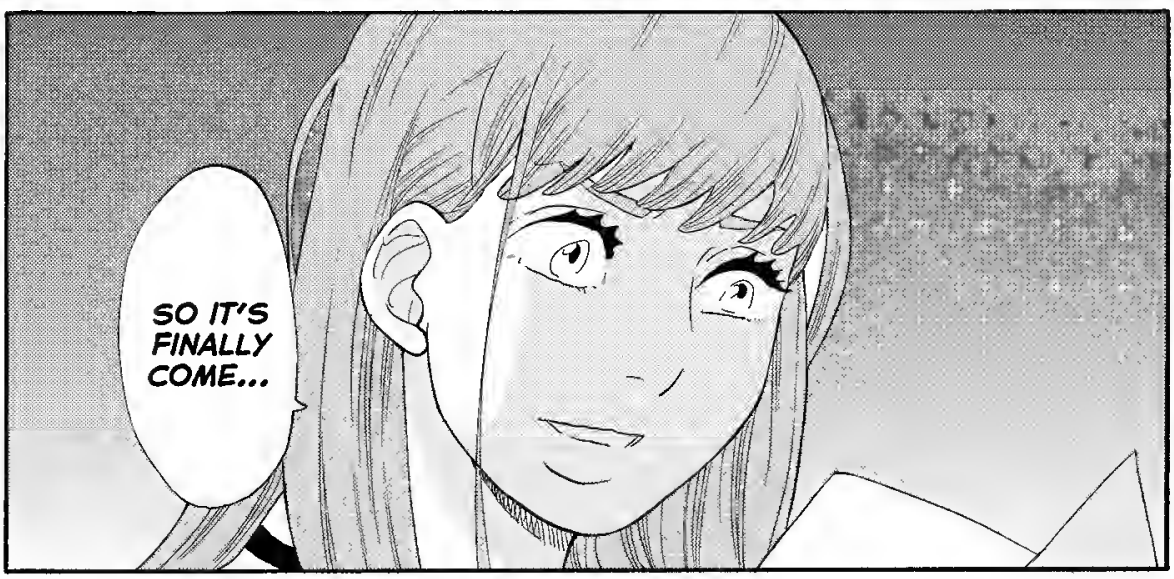
WHEN WE RETURNED TO TOKYO, CRADLING OUR HEADS FROM MASSIVE HANGOVERS...

...HAD EACH RECEIVED A WONDERFUL LETTER IN A PLAIN WHITE ENVELOPE.


THE THREE OF US...


...IT'S HERE...!

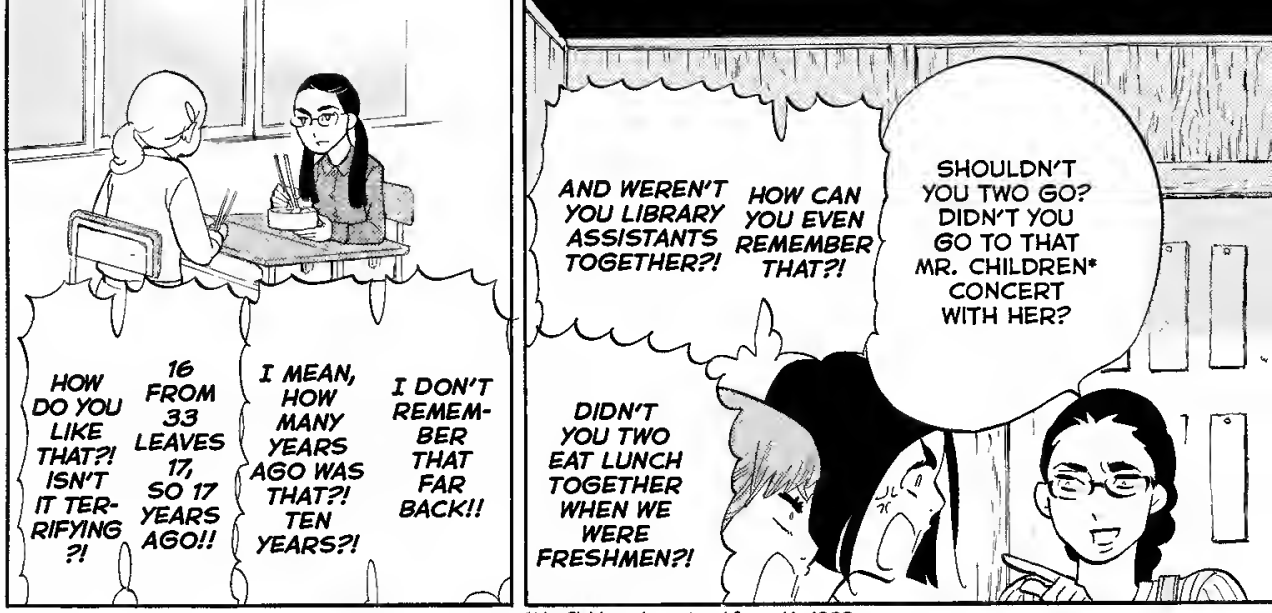
IT'S HERE, EH?


SO IT'S FINALLY COME...

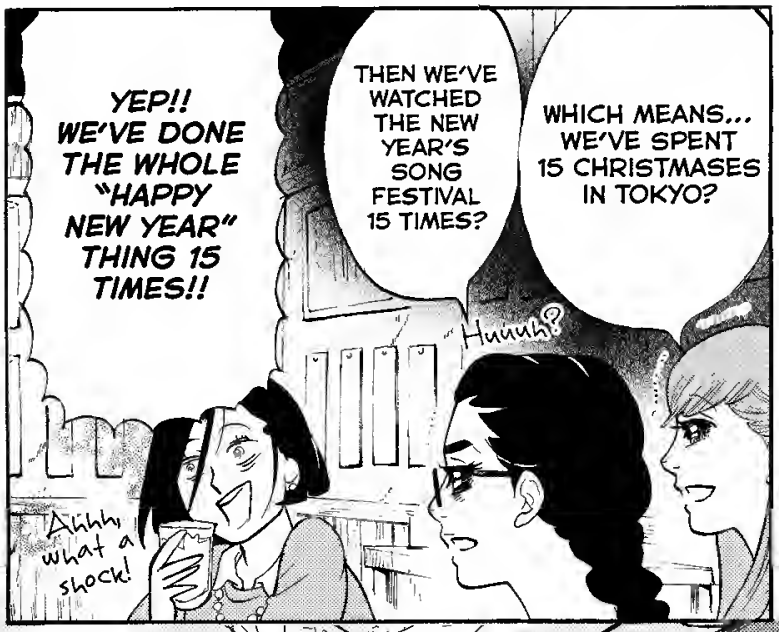
We hope that this day when he have started hearing that the plum flowers are blooming finds you well as we announce the joyous news:
We are getting married.
To demonstrate our gratitude for your constant friendship, as well as our desire to remain friends forever, we wisb to hold a modest ceremony.
We know everyone is extremely busy, but we hope you can come to:
Date: _____ (____day)
Time: 11:30 (Start)
Location: Nonaty Hotel Tokyo First Floor
Hiroki Shibata & Kazuko Kuniyoshi
As indicated, we are going to hold a wedding ceremony.
Tbis is all tbanks to you, our friends and family, and we appreciate it from the bottoms of our bearts.
We bope you all know tbat we wisb for your continued favor forever.
Though we know you are busy, we ask tbat you please inform us of your availability before ___ __.
BOOM
THE THIRD MARRIAGE RUSH!!

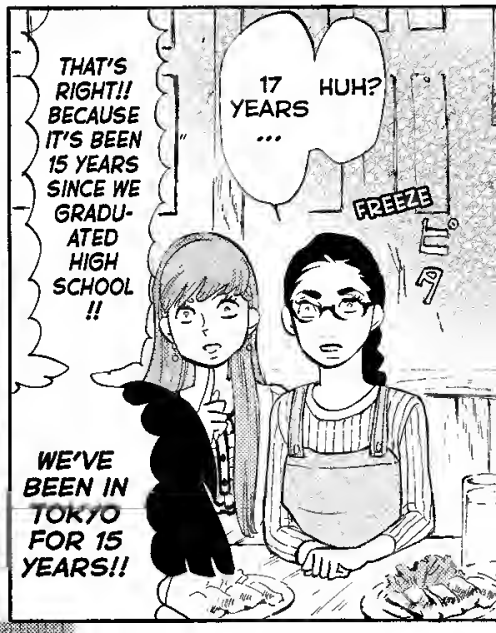
...YOU GOING?
I DON'T WANT TO GO...
IN FACT, WERE WE REALLY THAT CLOSE TO KAZUKO?
WE WERE IN THE SAME CLASS FOREVER, BUT WEREN'T WE IN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT GROUPS?

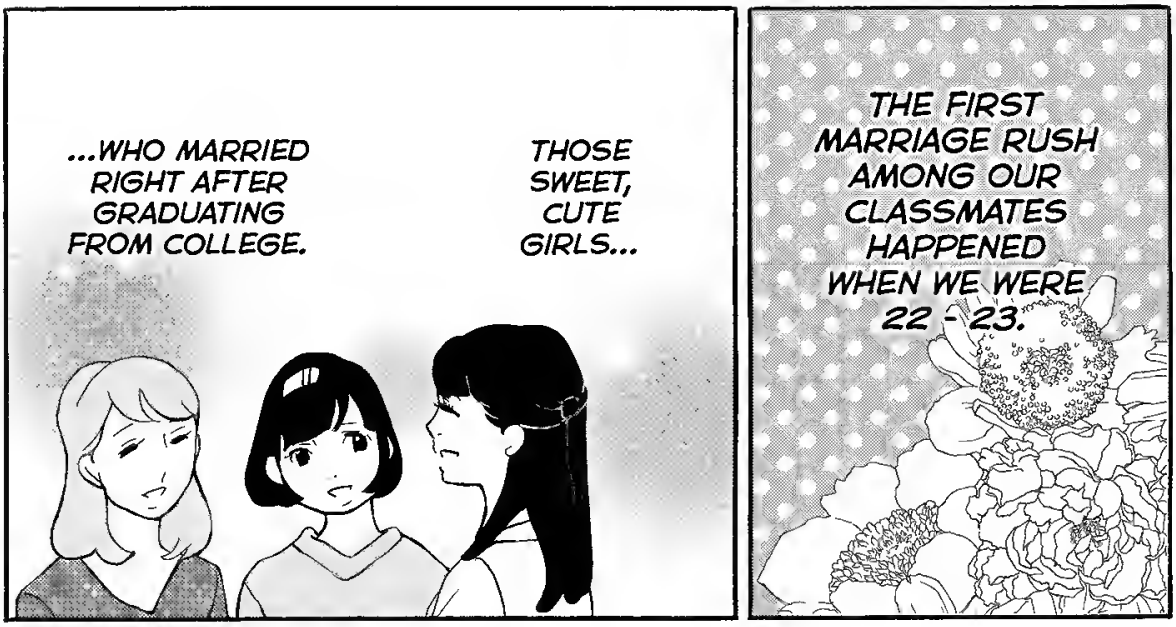
HEY, WHAT'S THE MATTER, LADIES?
YOU'RE AWFULLY QUIET AGAIN TONIGHT.

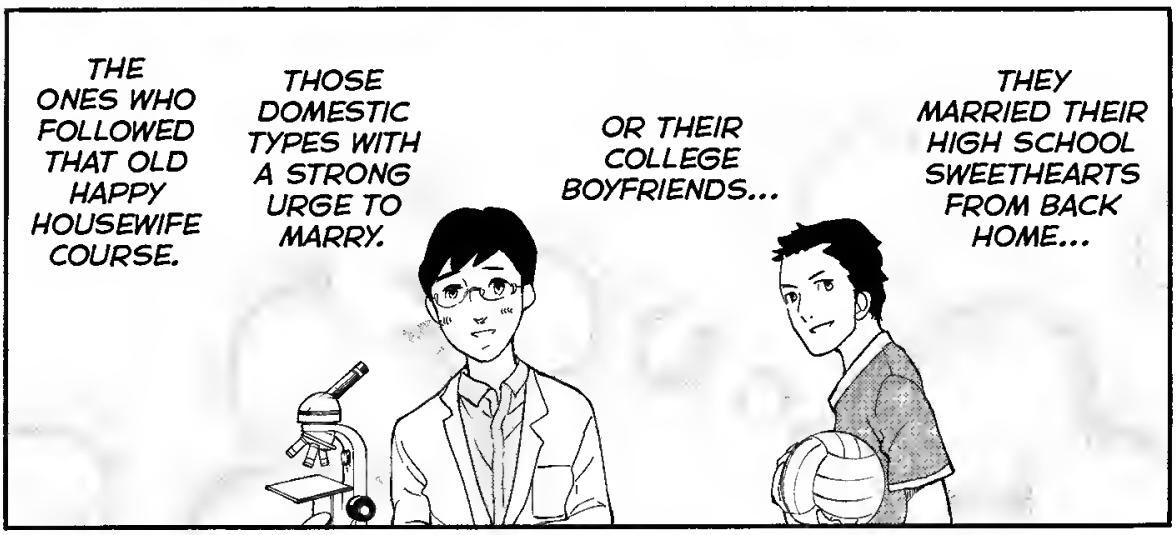

SHOULDN'T YOU TWO GO? DIDN'T YOU GO TO THAT MR. CHILDREN* CONCERT WITH HER?
HOW CAN YOU EVEN REMEMBER THAT?!
AND WEREN'T YOU LIBRARY ASSISTANTS TOGETHER?!
DIDN'T YOU TWO EAT LUNCH TOGETHER WHEN WE WERE FRESHMEN?!
I DON'T REMEMBER THAT FAR BACK!!
I MEAN, HOW MANY YEARS AGO WAS THAT?! TEN YEARS?!
16 FROM 33 LEAVES 17, SO 17 YEARS AGO!!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT?! ISN'T IT TERRIFYING?!

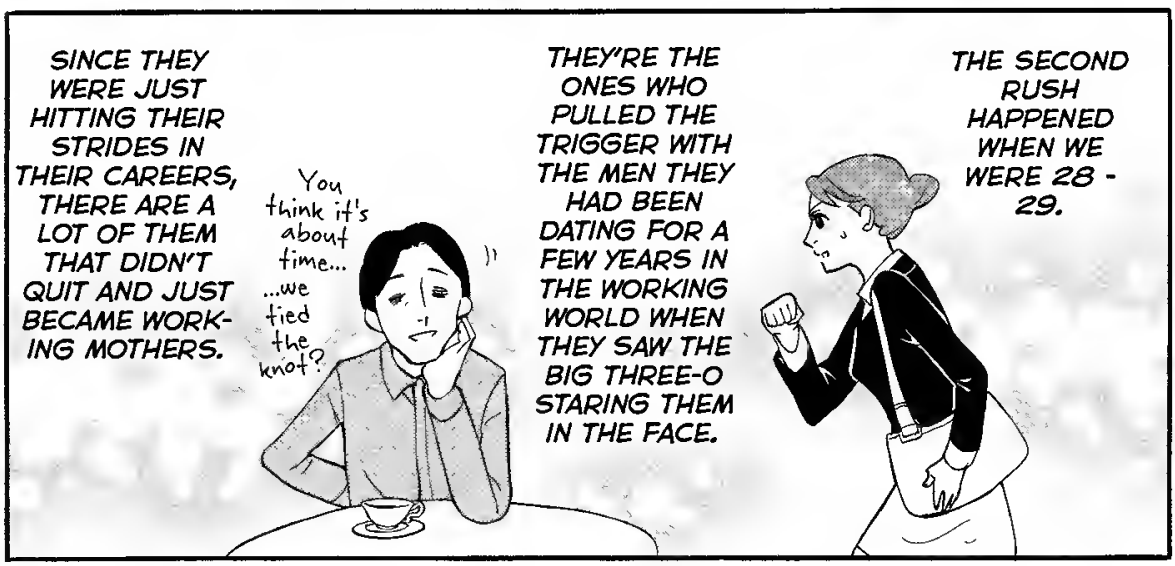
*Mr. Children: A pop band formed in 1989.

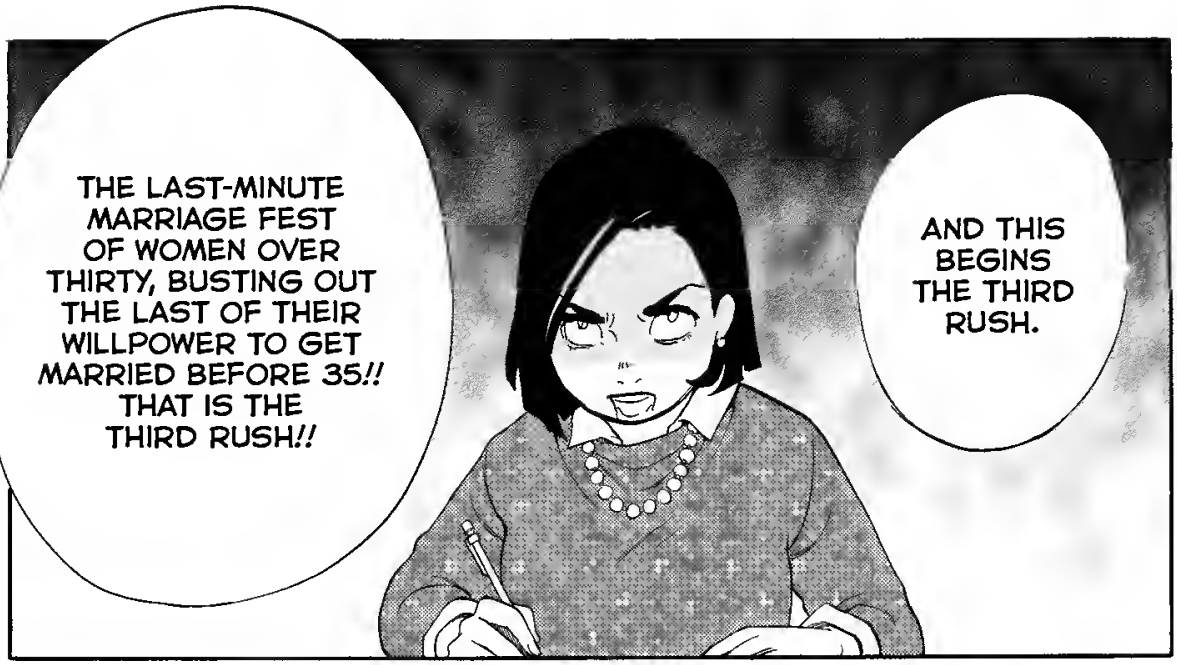

YEP!! WE'VE DONE THE WHOLE "HAPPY NEW YEAR" THING 15 TIMES!!
THEN WE'VE WATCHED THE NEW YEAR'S SONG FESTIVAL 15 TIMES?
WHICH MEANS... WE'VE SPENT 15 CHRISTMASES IN TOKYO?
Huuuh?
Ahhh, what a shock!

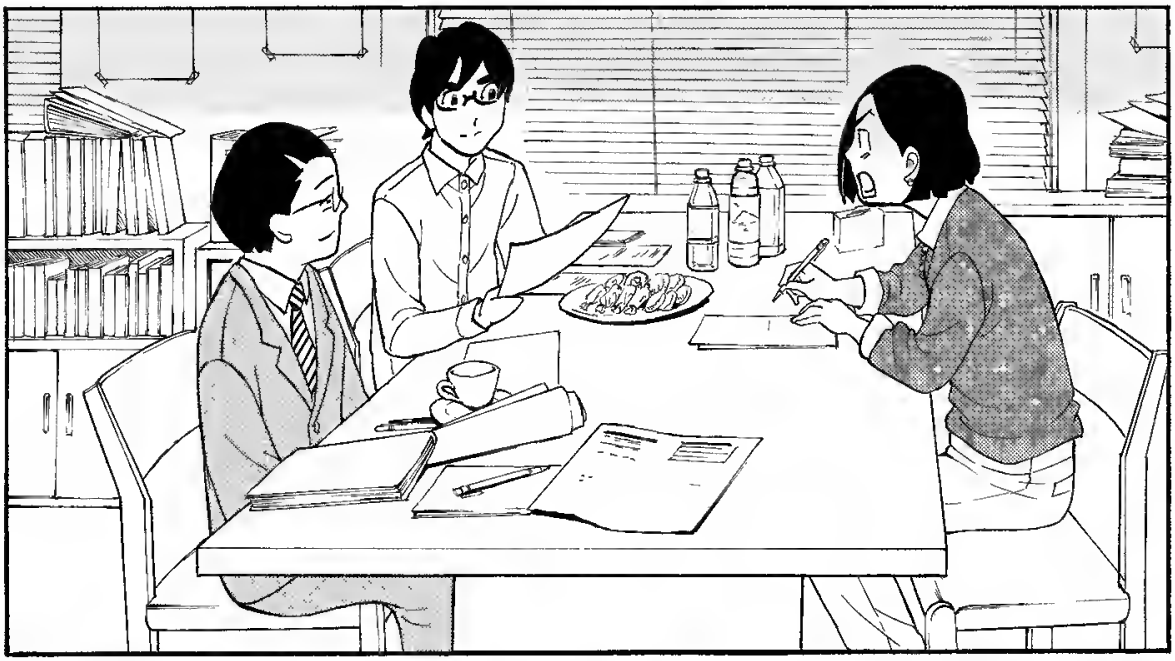


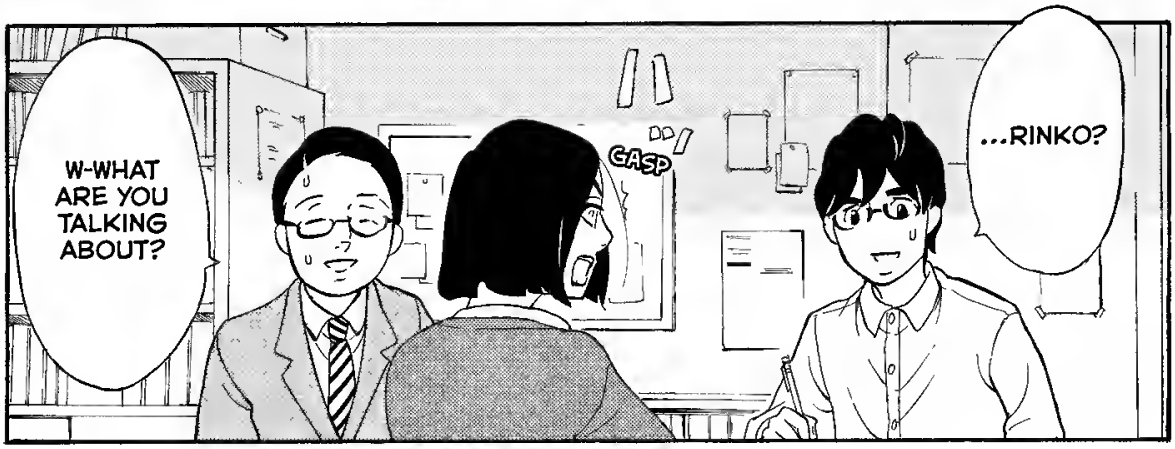

...WHO MARRIED RIGHT AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE.
THOSE SWEET, CUTE GIRLS...
THE FIRST MARRIAGE RUSH AMONG OUR CLASSMATES HAPPENED WHEN WE WERE 22 - 23.

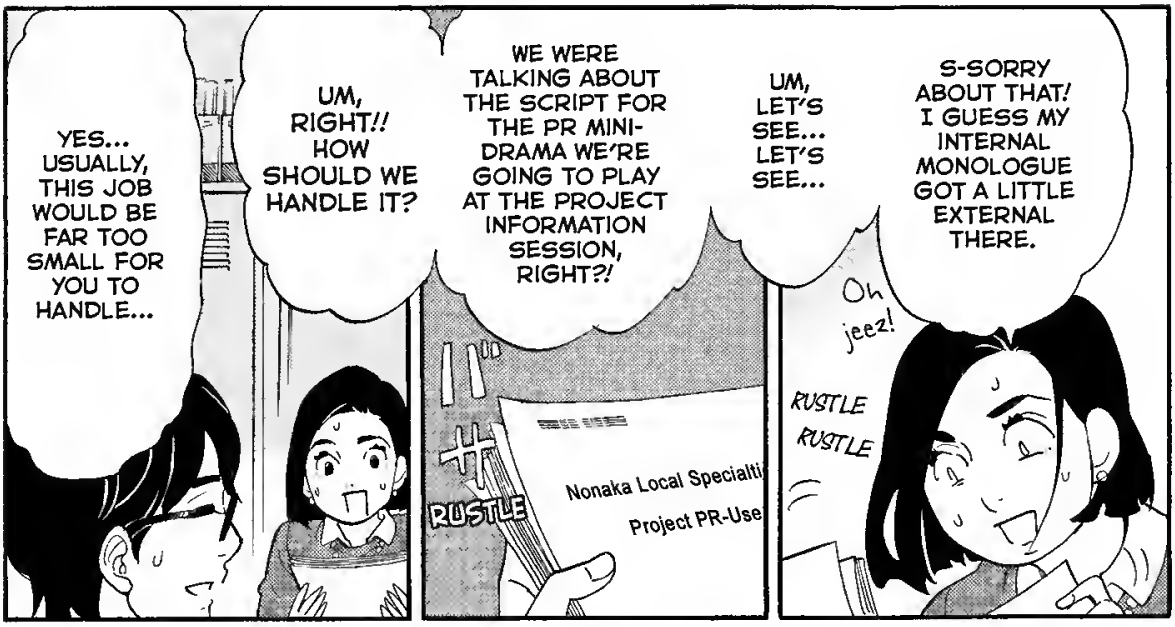

THE ONES WHO FOLLOWED THAT OLD HAPPY HOUSEWIFE COURSE.
THOSE DOMESTIC TYPES WITH A STRONG URGE TO MARRY.
OR THEIR COLLEGE BOYFRIENDS...
THEY MARRIED THEIR HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEARTS FROM BACK HOME...

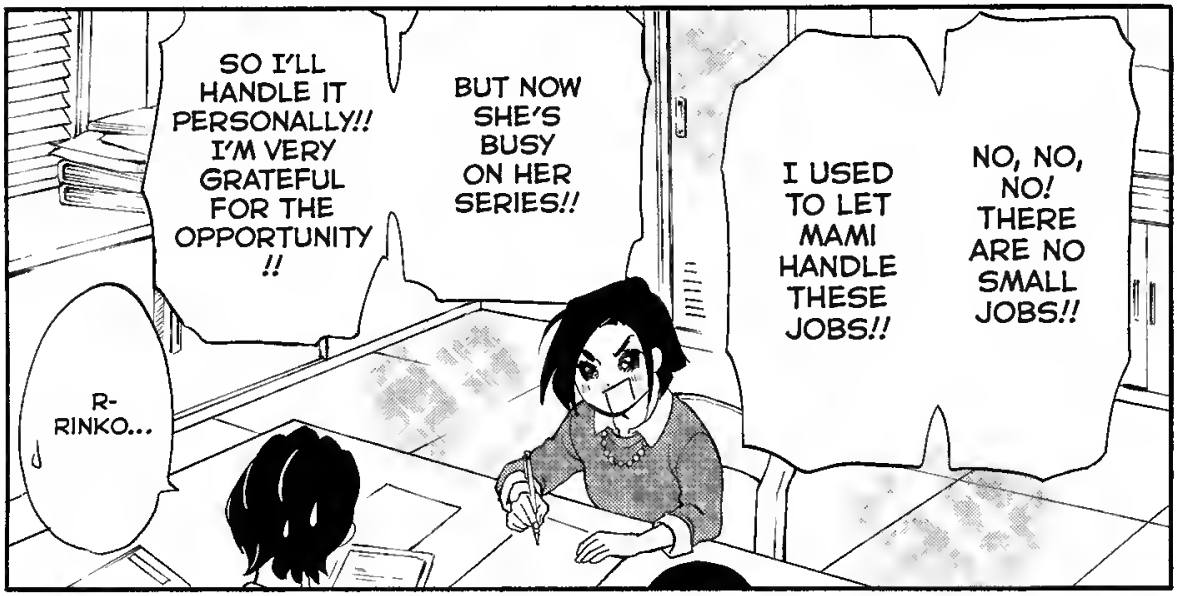

SINCE THEY WERE JUST HITTING THEIR STRIDES IN THEIR CAREERS, THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM THAT DIDN'T QUIT AND JUST BECAME WORKING MOTHERS.
You think it's about time... ...we tied the knot?
THEY'RE THE ONES WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER WITH THE MEN THEY HAD BEEN DATING FOR A FEW YEARS IN THE WORKING WORLD WHEN THEY SAW THE BIG THREE-O STARING THEM IN THE FACE.
THE SECOND RUSH HAPPENED WHEN WE WERE 28 - 29.


THE LAST-MINUTE MARRIAGE FEST OF WOMEN OVER THIRTY, BUSTING OUT THE LAST OF THEIR WILLPOWER TO GET MARRIED BEFORE 35!! THAT IS THE THIRD RUSH!!
AND THIS BEGINS THE THIRD RUSH.




W-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
GASP
...RINKO?


YES... USUALLY, THIS JOB WOULD BE FAR TOO SMALL FOR YOU TO HANDLE...
UM, RIGHT!! HOW SHOULD WE HANDLE IT?
WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE SCRIPT FOR THE PR MINI-DRAMA WE'RE GOING TO PLAY AT THE PROJECT INFORMATION SESSION, RIGHT?!
RUSTLE
Nonaka Local Specialti
Project PR-Use
UM, LET'S SEE... LET'S SEE...
S-SORRY ABOUT THAT! I GUESS MY INTERNAL MONOLOGUE GOT A LITTLE EXTERNAL THERE.
Oh jeez!
RUSTLE RUSTLE

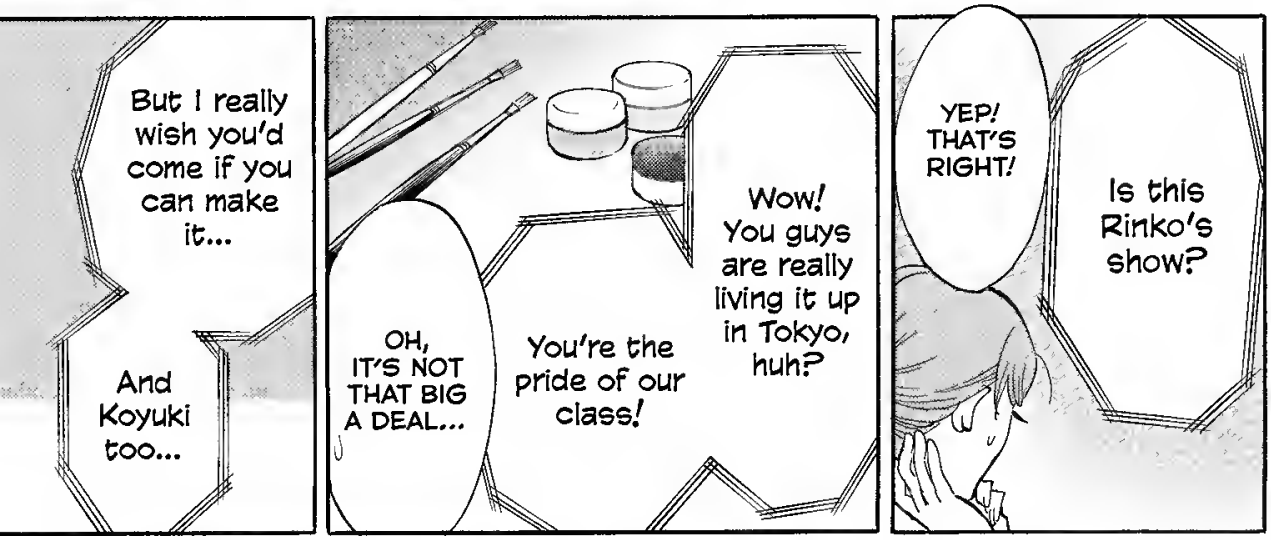

R-RINKO...
SO I'LL HANDLE IT PERSONALLY!! I'M VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY !!
BUT NOW SHE'S BUSY ON HER SERIES!!
I USED TO LET MAMI HANDLE THESE JOBS!!
NO, NO, NO! THERE ARE NO SMALL JOBS!!

FWAP
SO!
LET'S WORK OUT EVERY LAST SINGLE DETAIL!

Nail Salon

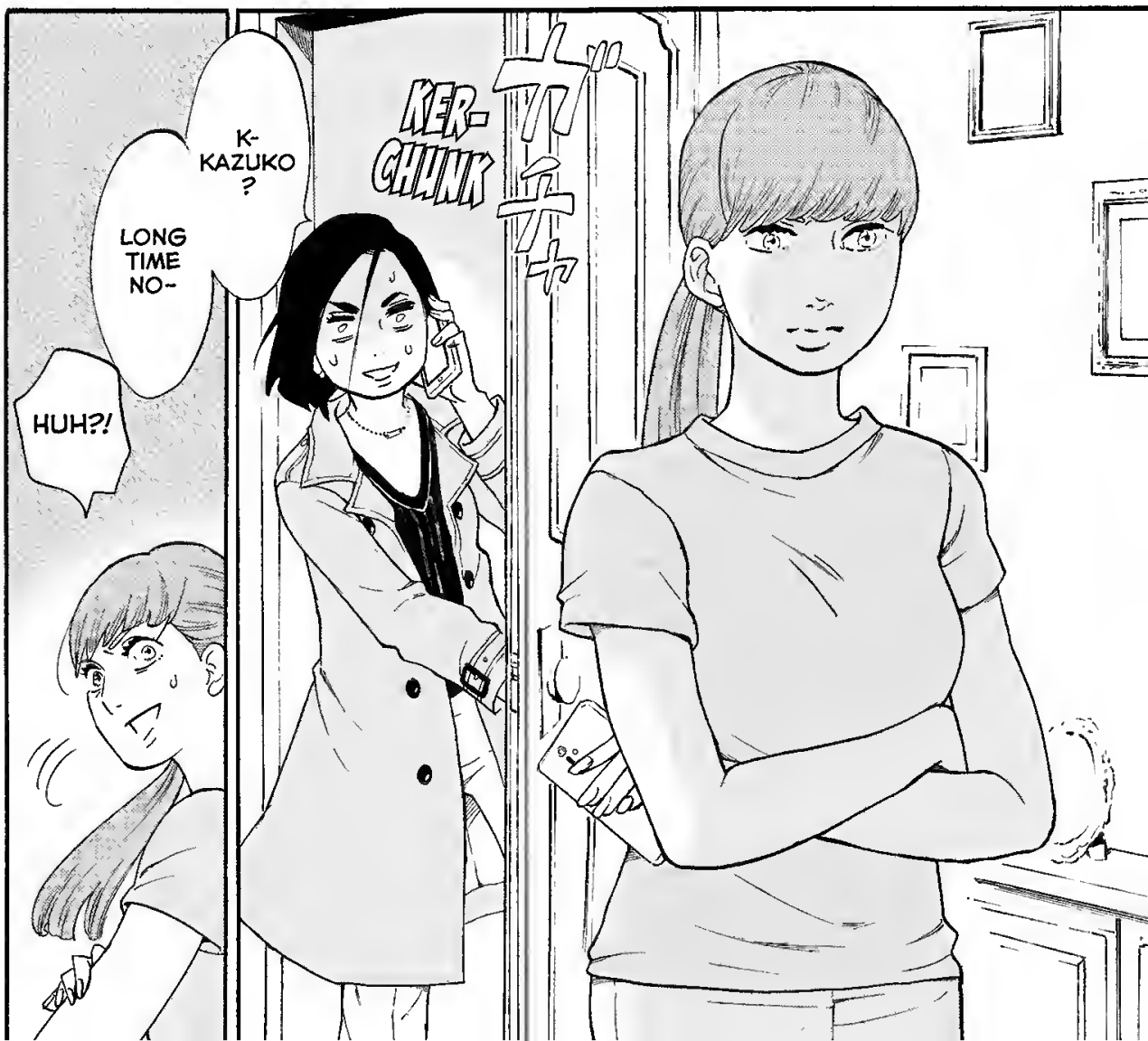
W-
WEDDING
NAILS?
I know you must be busy, Kaori, but do you have any openings the day before the wedding?
I'll pay you and everything! Please...
...WHEN WAS THE WEDDING AGAIN?
What? Didn't you get an invitation?
It's ___ the ___ ...
OH... RIGHT...
YEAH, I REMEMBER NOW. SORRY...
You'll be there, won't you, Kaori?

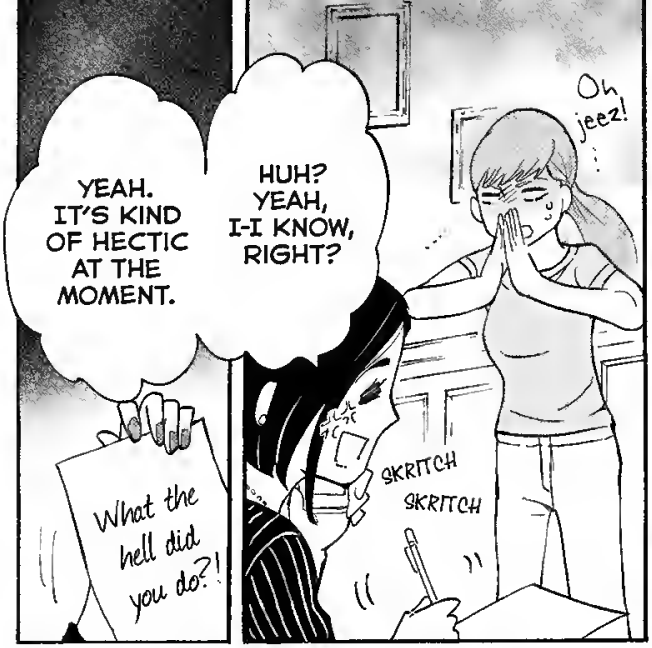
I-I'VE GOTTA DO AN ACTRESS'S NAILS... ON LOCATION...
I-I'M HEADING OUT FOR A... FILM SHOOT?
THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY, UM, APPOINT-MENTS...
HUH?! OH, YEAH.
Huh?! Film shoot?!
AND NOW I'M KIND OF... MOVING THINGS AROUND...
WELL, ACTUALLY, MY SCHED-ULE'S PRETTY PACKED THAT DAY...
W-
Huh?! You're booked that far in advance?!


But I really wish you'd come if you can make it...
And Koyuki too...
OH, IT'S NOT THAT BIG A DEAL...
You're the pride of our class!
Wow! You guys are really living it up in Tokyo, huh?
YEP! THAT'S RIGHT!
Is this Rinko's show?

Really? Then I'll call Rinko too.
IF RINKO CAN COME AFTER ADJUST-ING OUR SCHEDULES, I CAN COME TOO.
I-IT MAY DEPEND ON RINKO'S SCHED-ULE...
Y-YEAH, BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW FOR SURE...
But if you've got to work, you've got to work...
It's been so long, I really wanted to see you...

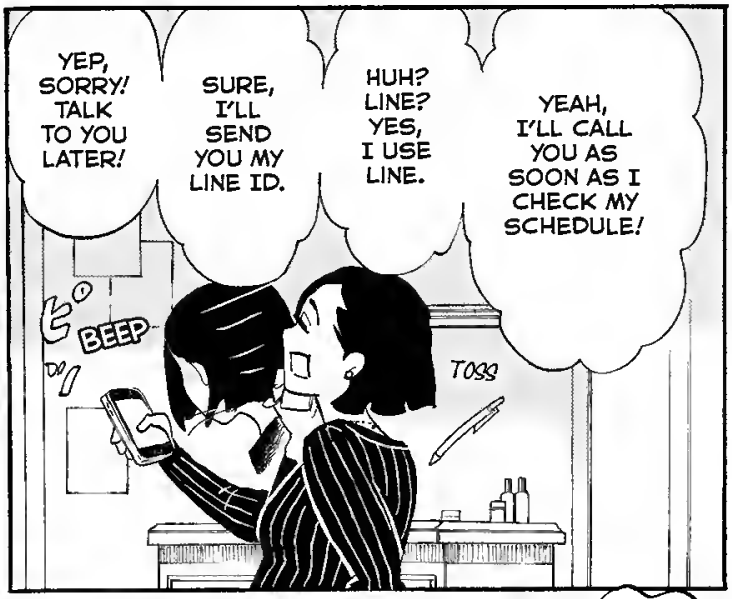
We Do
Wedding Nails
...
BEEP
CALL ENDED


K-KAZUKO?
LONG TIME NO-
HUH?!
KER-CHUNK


YEAH. IT'S KIND OF HECTIC AT THE MOMENT.
HUH? YEAH, I-I KNOW, RIGHT?
Oh, jeez!
What the hell did you do?!
SKRITCH SKRITCH

HUH? KAORI? OH, REALLY?
GRAB
SHE SAID THAT? I SEE. I SEE.

GLARE


YEP, SORRY! TALK TO YOU LATER!
SURE, I'LL SEND YOU MY LINE ID.
HUH? LINE? YES, I USE LINE.
YEAH, I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS I CHECK MY SCHEDULE!
BEEP
TOSS

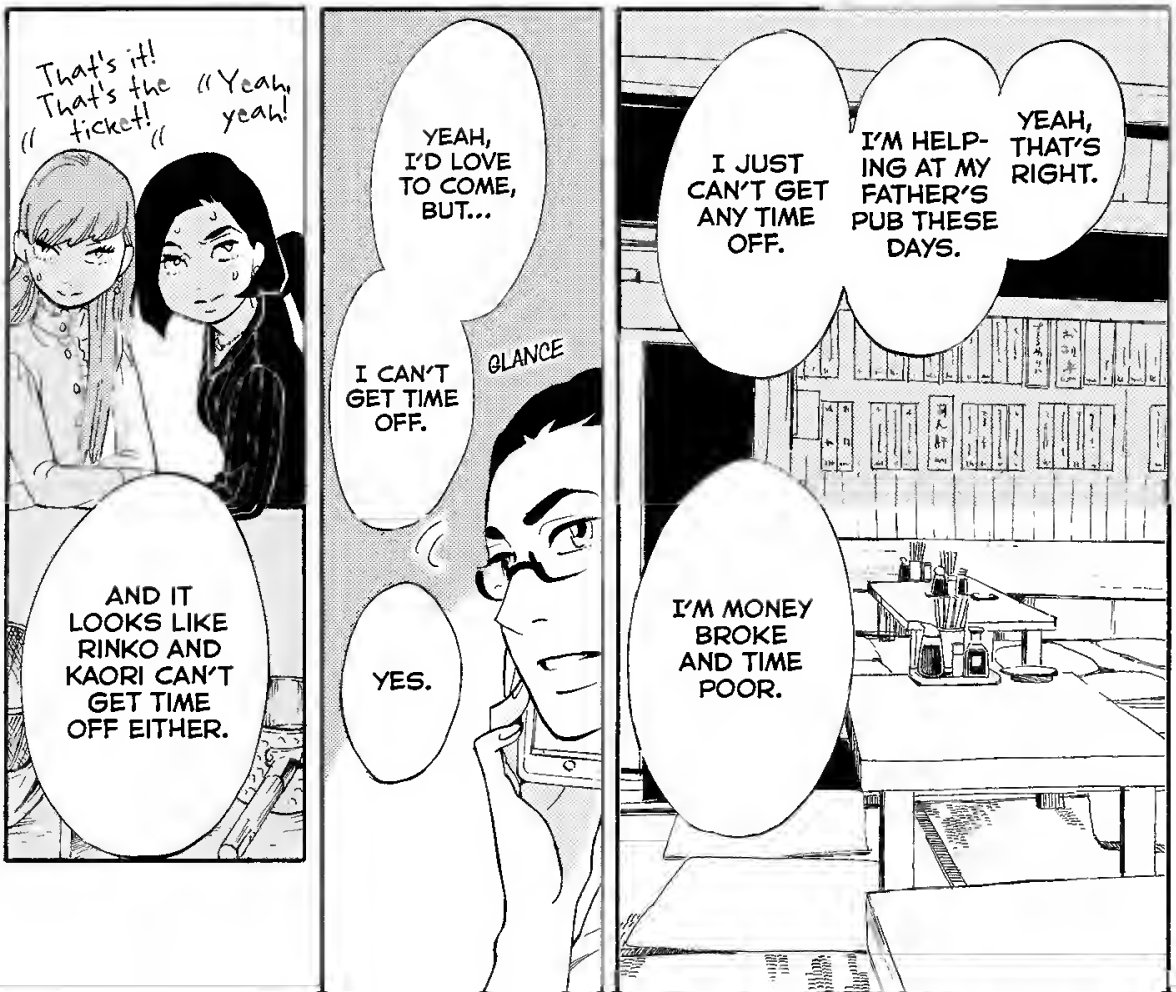
I KNOW, RIGHT?!
ISN'T THAT KIND OF BRAZEN?
HUH? FOR REAL?

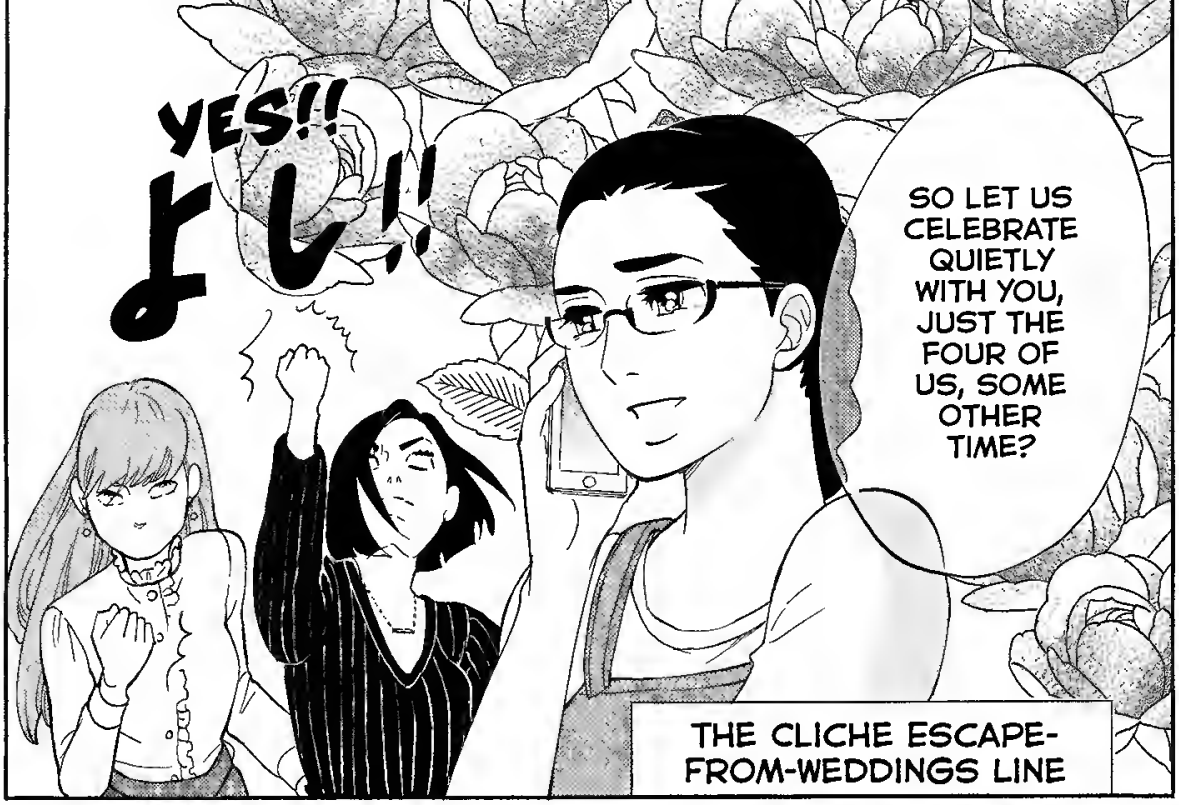
WELL, SHE WANTED ME TO DO HER WEDDING NAILS!!
WHADDA YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, RUNNING AWAY AND LEAVING THE DECISION IN MY HANDS?!
Gotcha!!
Ow! Ow!

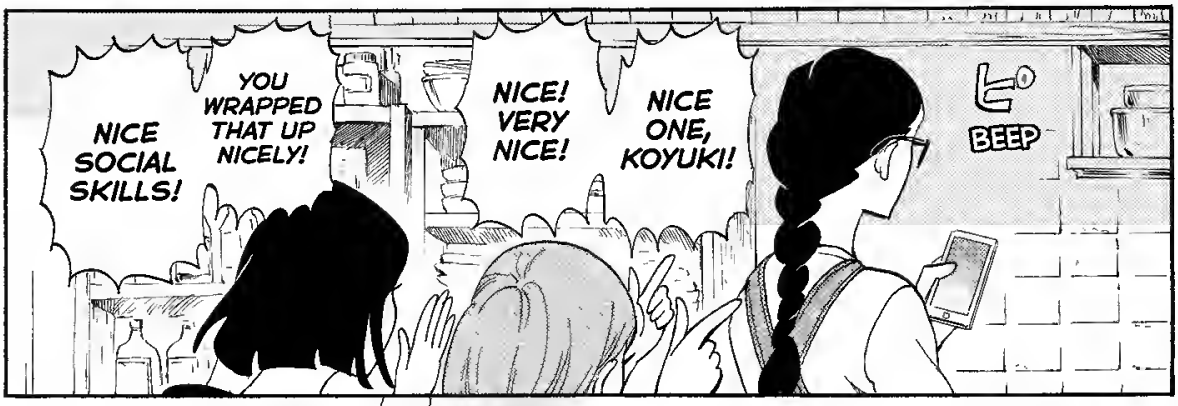
YARGH!! I'M SORRY!!
KAORI!!!!
WHOOSH

What? Are you sure?
PAY! PAY! PAY!
Oh, I can't take your money...
I MEAN, THE WEDDING'S IN SAITAMA?! SHE EXPECTS ME TO COME TO SAITAMA?!
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DO WEDDING NAILS FOR A FRIEND I'VE BARELY SEEN SINCE HIGH SCHOOL!!
TELL HER TO COME TO YOU, STUPID!! AND TAKE HER MONEY !!
NO WAY!! IT'LL DEFINITELY TURN INTO ONE OF THOSE "THIS IS A WEDDING PRESENT FROM ME, SO I CAN'T TAKE YOUR MONEY" SITUATIONS!!
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT!! THAT ALWAYS HAP-PENS WITH GIRLS !!
YARGH! YARGH!
YEAH, BUT I COULDN'T STRAIGHT UP TURN HER DOWN!!
WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR ANYWAY, RINKO?!
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST FLAT OUT TELL HER NO?!
WHAT AM I HERE FOR?! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY AT 2?!
YEAH, I FORGOT!! MY HEAD STILL HURTS FROM DRINKING TOO MUCH LAST NIGHT!!
...IT'S NO USE...
LET'S GET KOYUKI TO TELL HER NO.
HUFF HUFF

KAZUKO.
LONG TIME NO SPEAK.
THANKS FOR THE INVITATION.
PUB


YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.
I'M HELPING AT MY FATHER'S PUB THESE DAYS.
I JUST CAN'T GET ANY TIME OFF.
I'M MONEY BROKE AND TIME POOR.
YEAH, I'D LOVE TO COME, BUT...
GLANCE
I CAN'T GET TIME OFF.
YES.
That's it! That's the ticket!
Yeah, yeah!
AND IT LOOKS LIKE RINKO AND KAORI CAN'T GET TIME OFF EITHER.

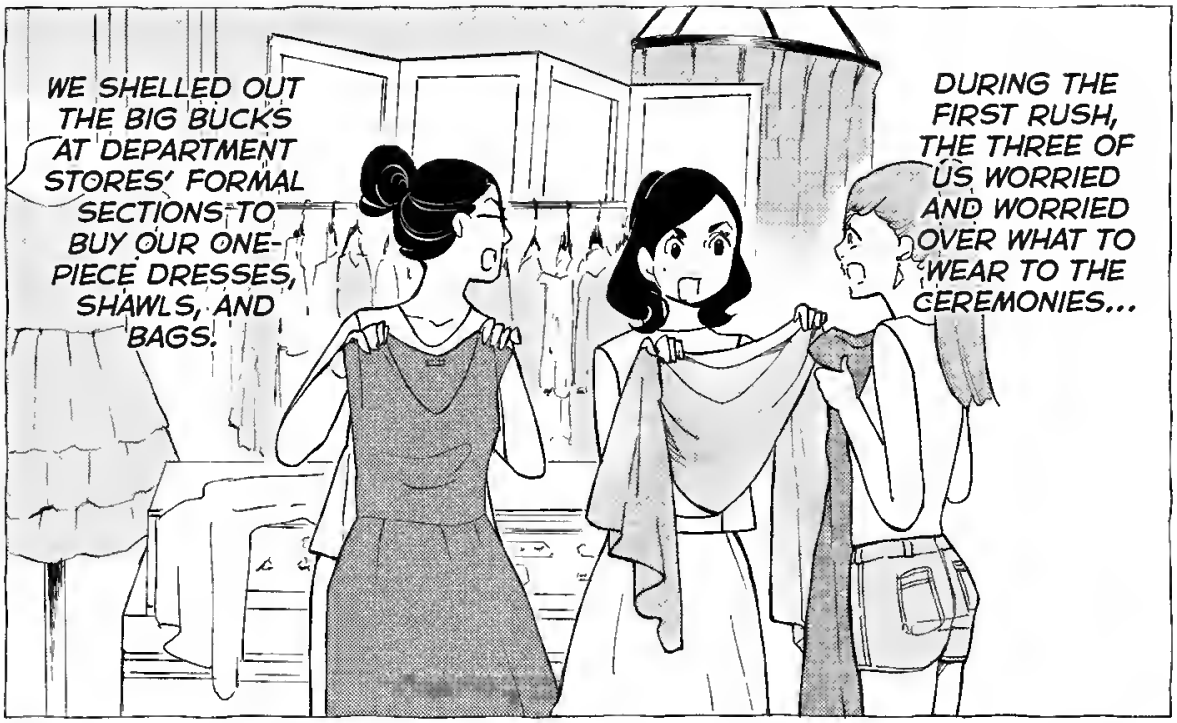


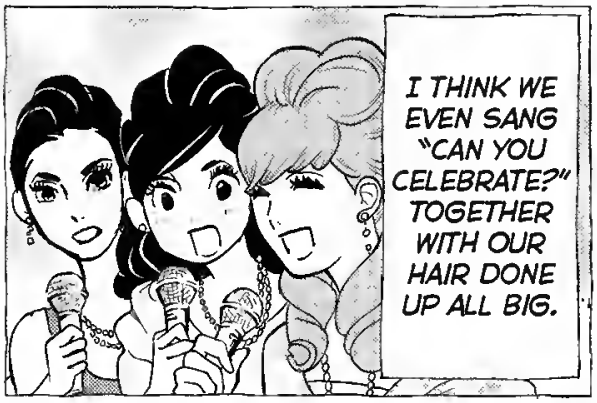


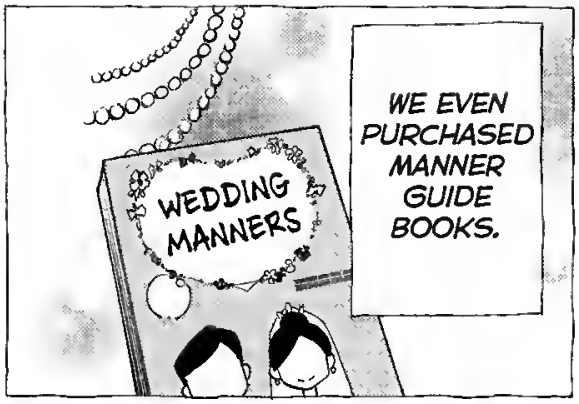
EVEN WE ENJOYED ...

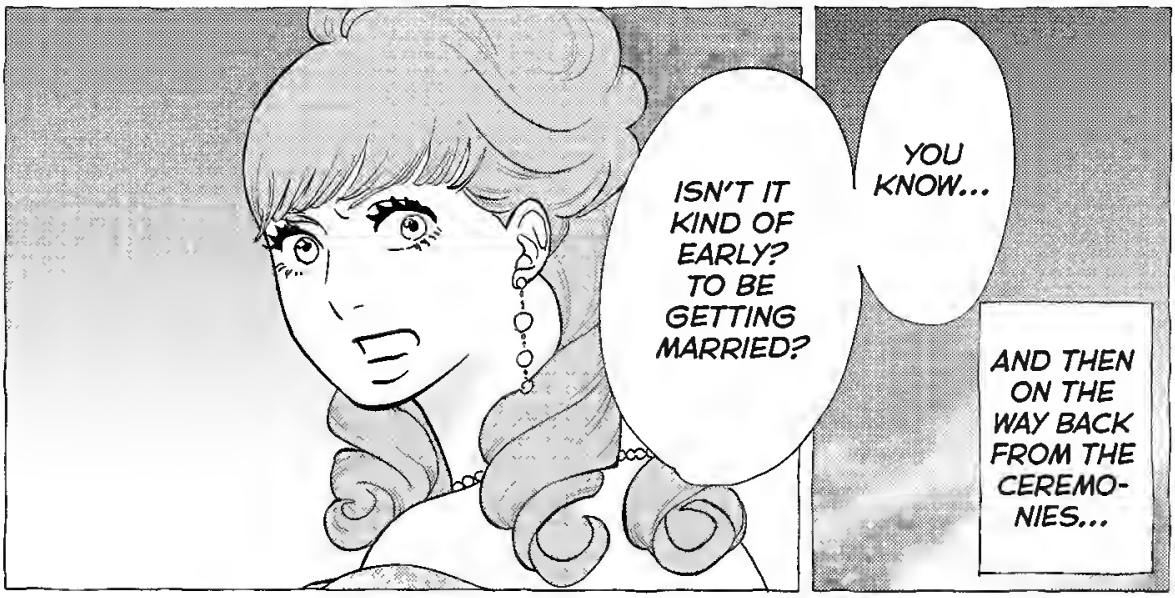
...GOING TO WEDDINGS IN OUR TWENTIES.

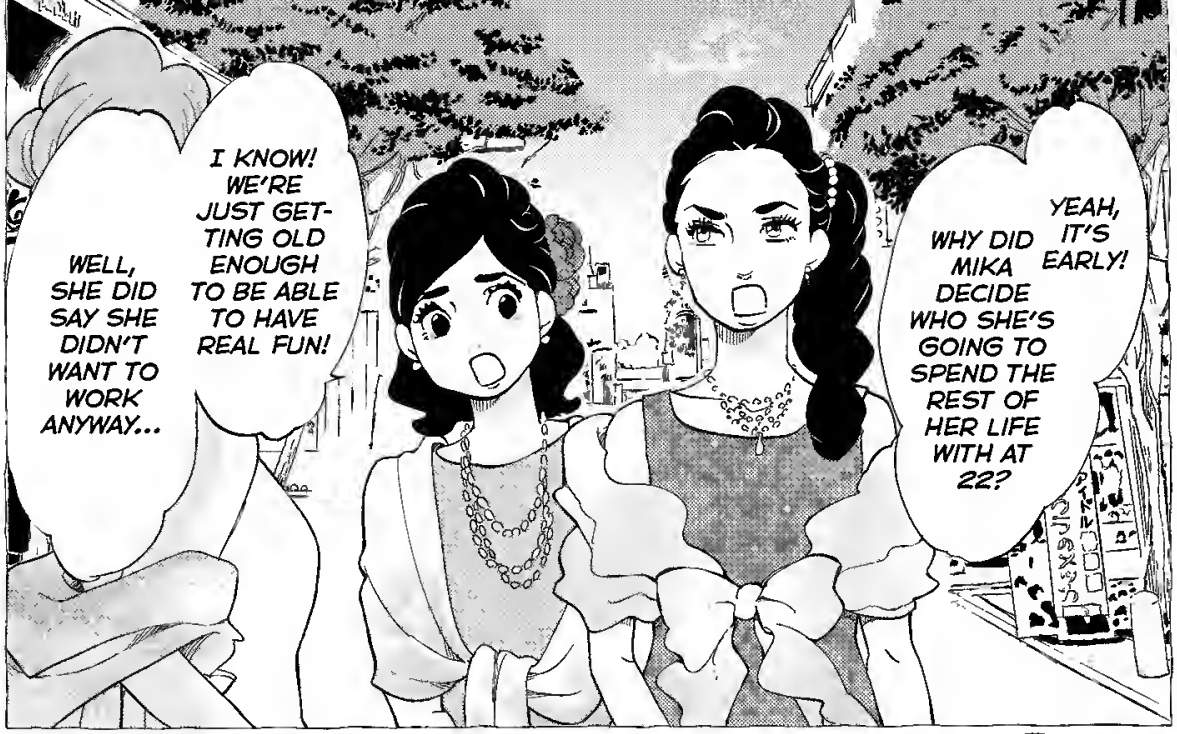
AND WE WON'T BE STUCK WITH SOME SOUVENIR WE NEVER EVEN WANTED!!
WOO-HOO!! THAT SAVED ME 30,000 ON A WEDDING GIFT!!
YAY!!
AND I DON'T HAVE TO DO HER STUPID WEDDING NAILS!


WE SHELLED OUT THE BIG BUCKS AT DEPARTMENT STORES' FORMAL SECTIONS TO BUY OUR ONE-PIECE DRESSES, SHAWLS, AND BAGS.
DURING THE FIRST RUSH, THE THREE OF US WORRIED AND WORRIED OVER WHAT TO WEAR TO THE CEREMONIES...

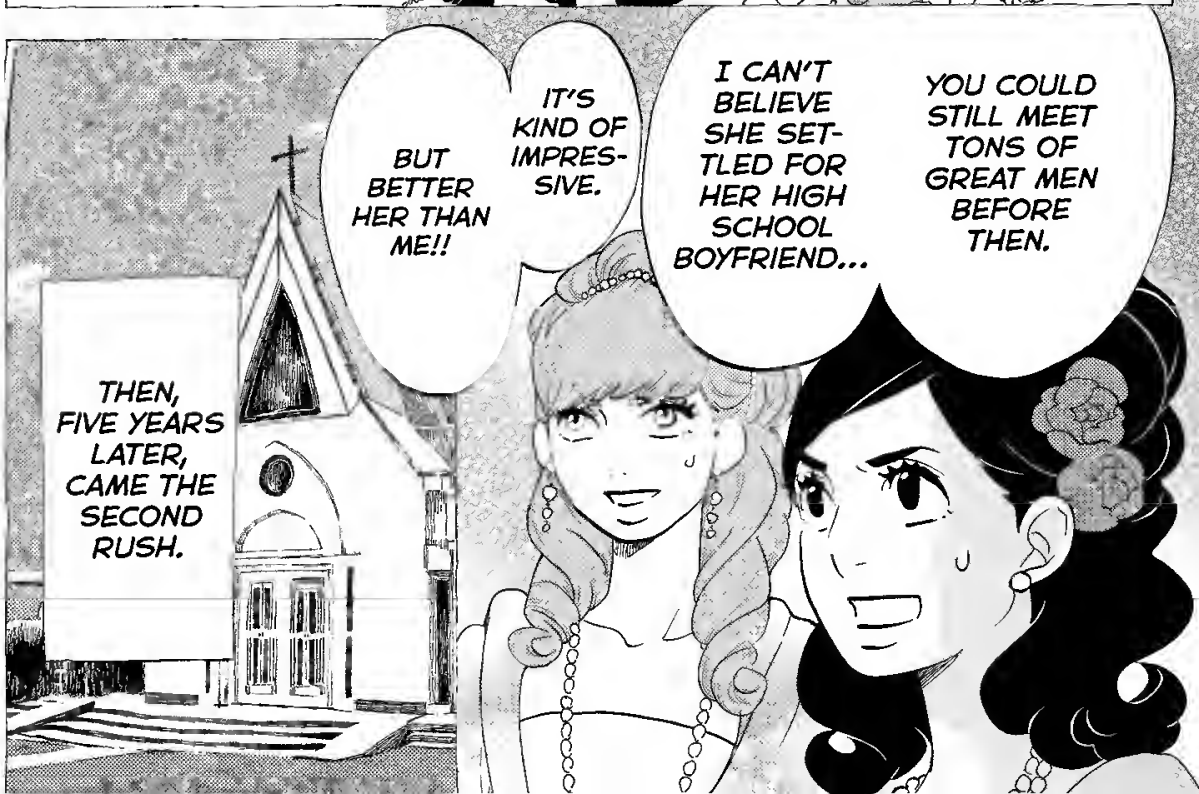

I THINK WE EVEN SANG "CAN YOU CELEBRATE?" TOGETHER WITH OUR HAIR DONE UP ALL BIG.

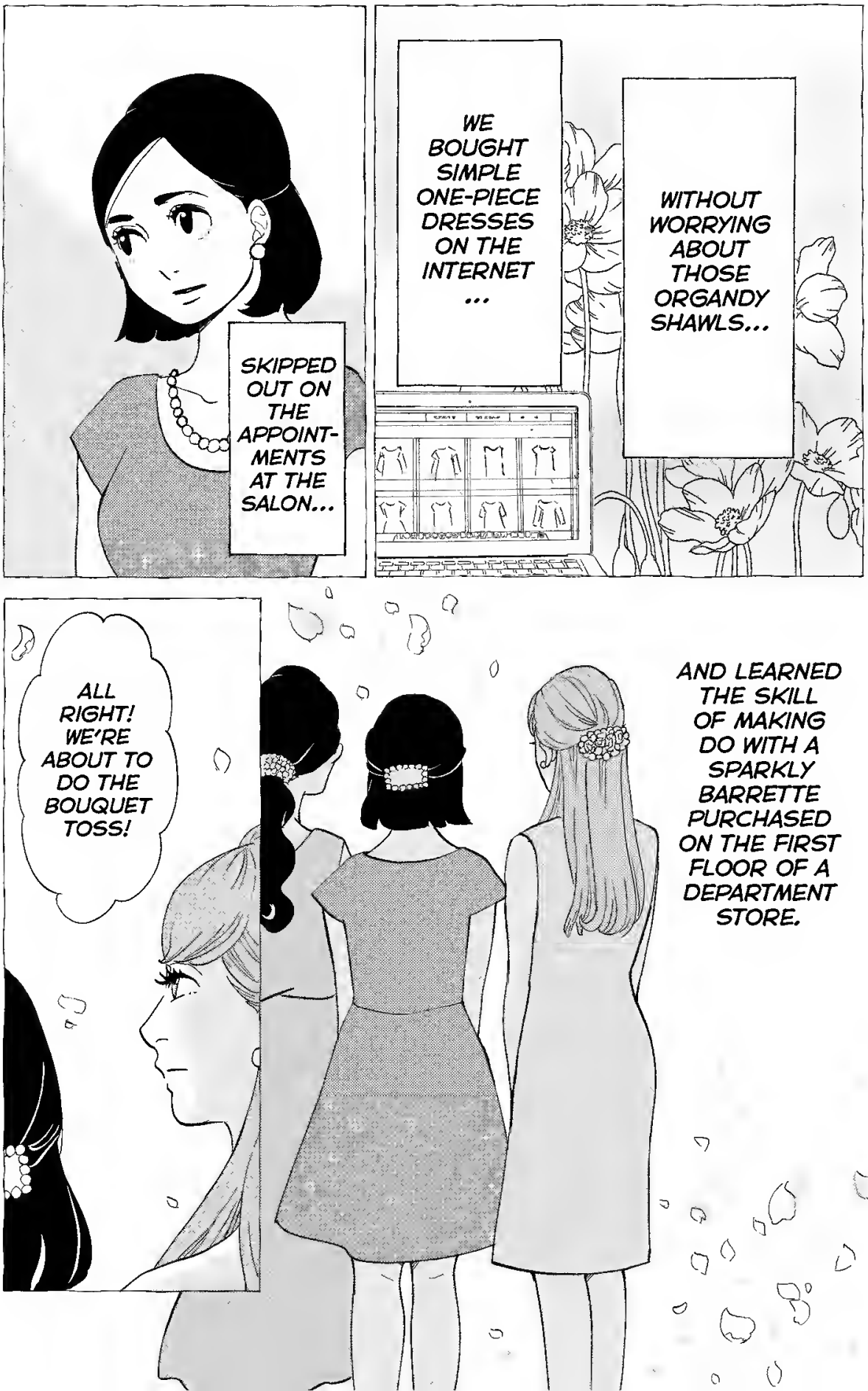

WEDDING MANNERS
WE EVEN PURCHASED MANNER GUIDE BOOKS.

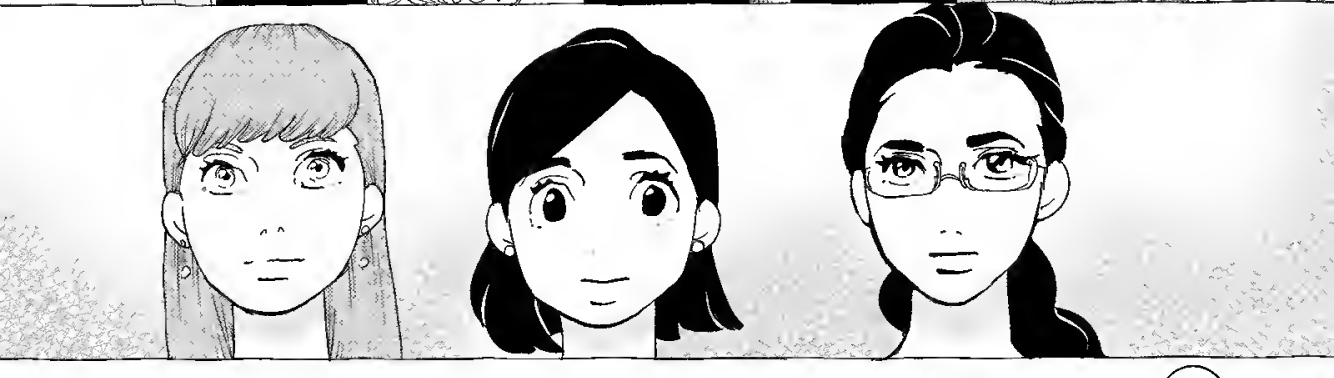

ISN'T IT KIND OF EARLY? TO BE GETTING MARRIED?
YOU KNOW...
AND THEN ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE CEREMO-NIES...

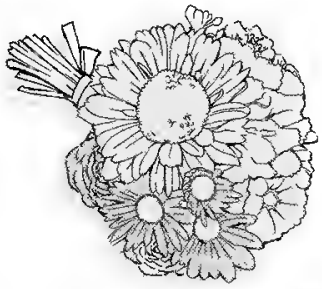

YEAH, IT'S EARLY!
WHY DID MIKA DECIDE WHO SHE'S GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF HER LIFE WITH AT 22?
I KNOW! WE'RE JUST GETTING OLD ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO HAVE REAL FUN!
WELL, SHE DID SAY SHE DIDN'T WANT TO WORK ANYWAY...

I WANNA PARTY FOR AT LEAST FIVE MORE YEARS!
WE'LL STILL BE 28 IN FIVE YEARS, RIGHT?
THAT'S PLENTY OF TIME!
MARRYING AT 30 IS THE NEW STANDARD!


YOU COULD STILL MEET TONS OF GREAT MEN BEFORE THEN.
I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE SETTLED FOR HER HIGH SCHOOL BOYFRIEND...
IT'S KIND OF IMPRESSIVE.
BUT BETTER HER THAN ME!!
THEN, FIVE YEARS LATER, CAME THE SECOND RUSH.


SKIPPED OUT ON THE APPOINT-MENTS AT THE SALON...
WE BOUGHT SIMPLE ONE-PIECE DRESSES ON THE INTERNET ...
WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT THOSE ORGANDY SHAWLS...
ALL RIGHT! WE'RE ABOUT TO DO THE BOUQUET TOSS!
AND LEARNED THE SKILL OF MAKING DO WITH A SPARKLY BARRETTE PURCHASED ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF A DEPARTMENT STORE.



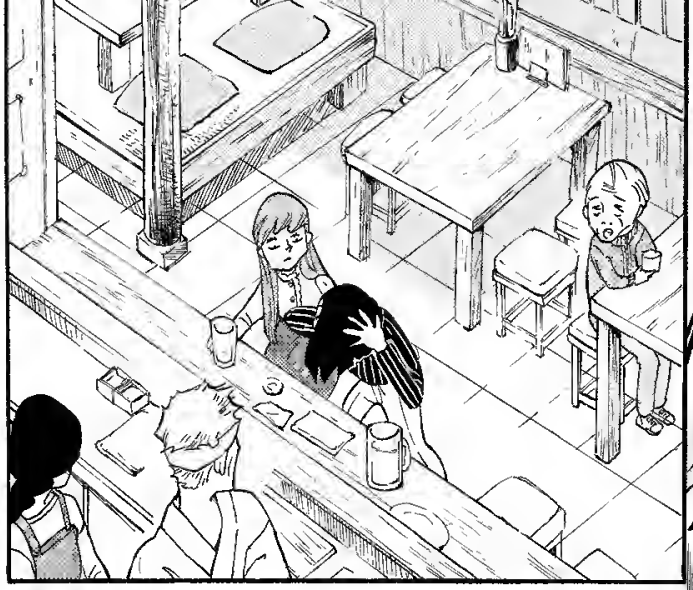


AND IN RESPONSE TO THE CUTE BOUQUET...

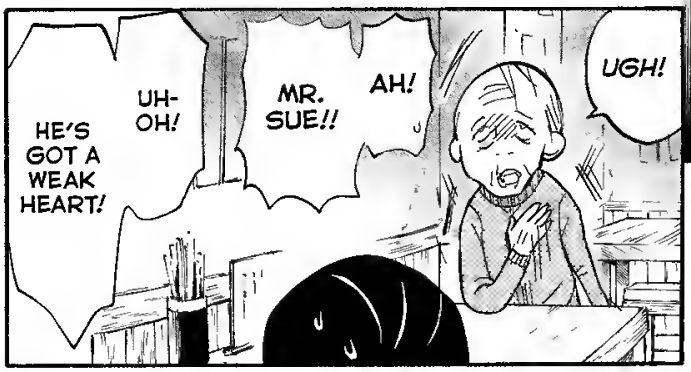
...TOSSED AT US IN OUR ADVANCING YEARS...

GRAB
WE DIDN'T BUDGE A SINGLE INCH.
EEEK!
You did it, Meg!!
AND AGAIN ON THE WAY HOME...
SO YOSHIE SETTLED FOR THAT GUY?
YEAH... BUT I GUESS SHE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.

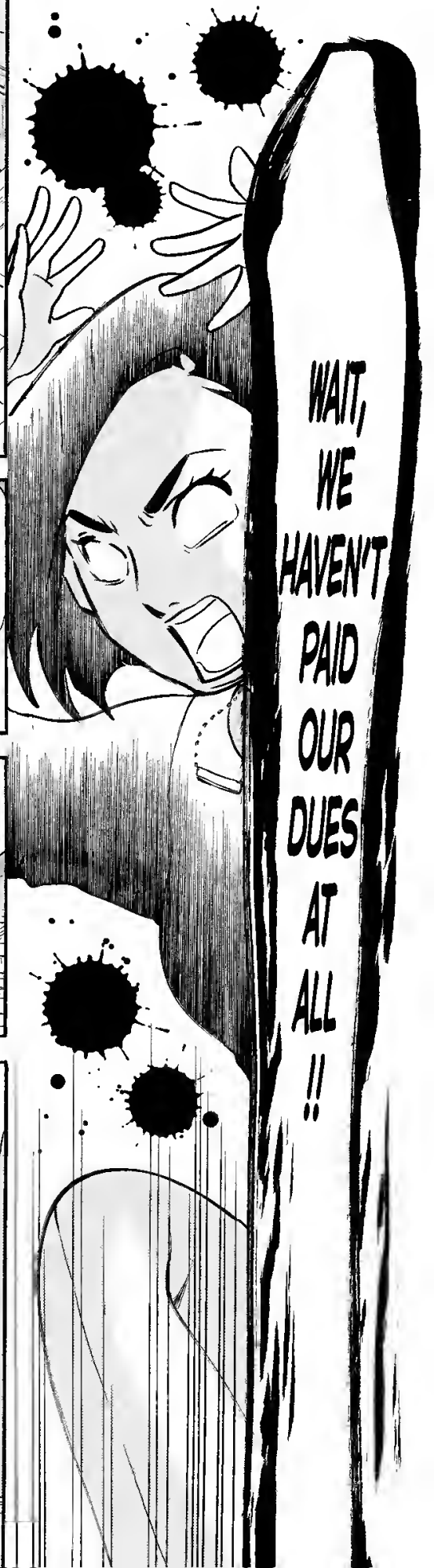
HE SEEMS NICE AND HARD-WORKING.
HE IS A CIVIL SERVANT.
AND HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE CHEATING TYPE.
...
YOU KNOW, IT'S ABOUT TIME WE...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING SOONER OR LATER.
WE'VE GOTTA FIND SOME GOOD MEN BEFORE WE'RE THIRTY.
I DON'T CARE IF HE'S RICH!
I CAN'T BE GREEDY ANYMORE EITHER!
I'M FINE WITH ANYONE WHO ISN'T THE FIRST BORN SON!!
ALL RIGHT!! IT'S FINALLY TIME FOR US TO PAY OUR DUES!!
FAREWELL, WILD YOUTH!! FAREWELL, CAREFREE DAYS!!



YEAH. TRY TO AT LEAST NOT SCREAM OUT LOUD.
RINKO ... YOU'RE SCARING THE OTHER CUSTOM-ERS... OKAY?

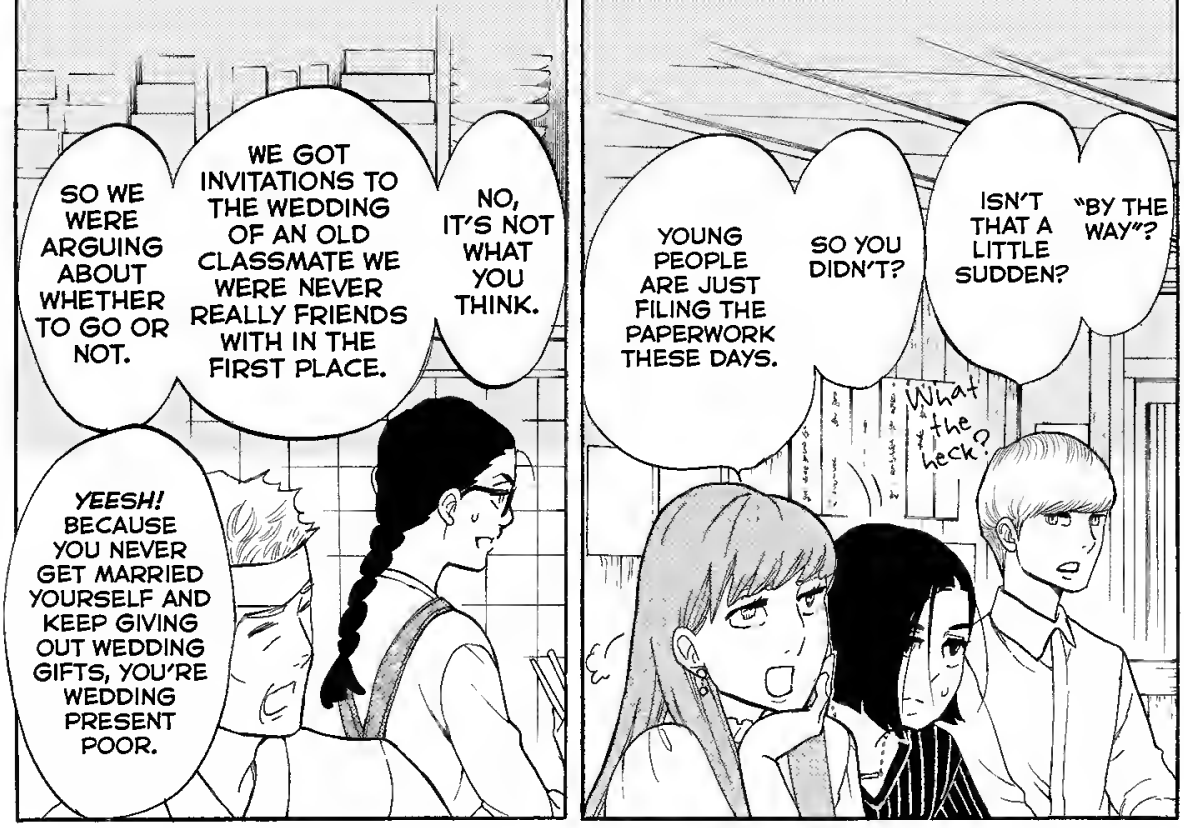

UGH!
AH! MR. SUE!!
UH-OH! HE'S GOT A WEAK HEART!

HUFF HUFF !
OH CRAP!! CALL AN AMBULANCE !!
WHAT ?! NO WAY!!
IN FACT...

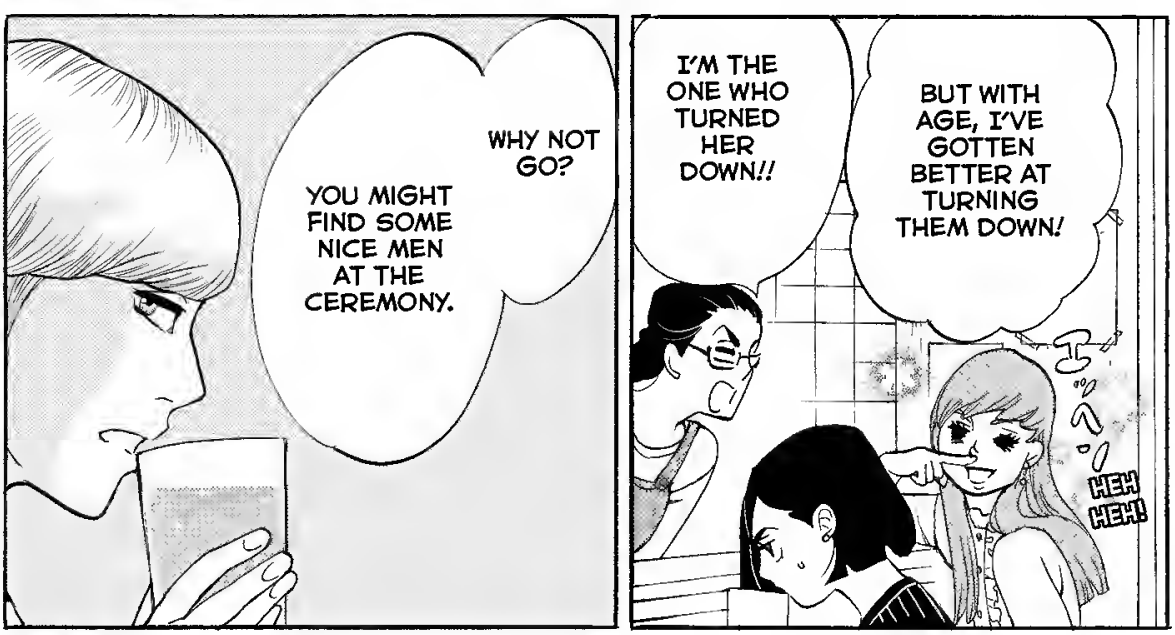

WAIT, WE HAVEN'T PAID OUR DUES AT ALL !!

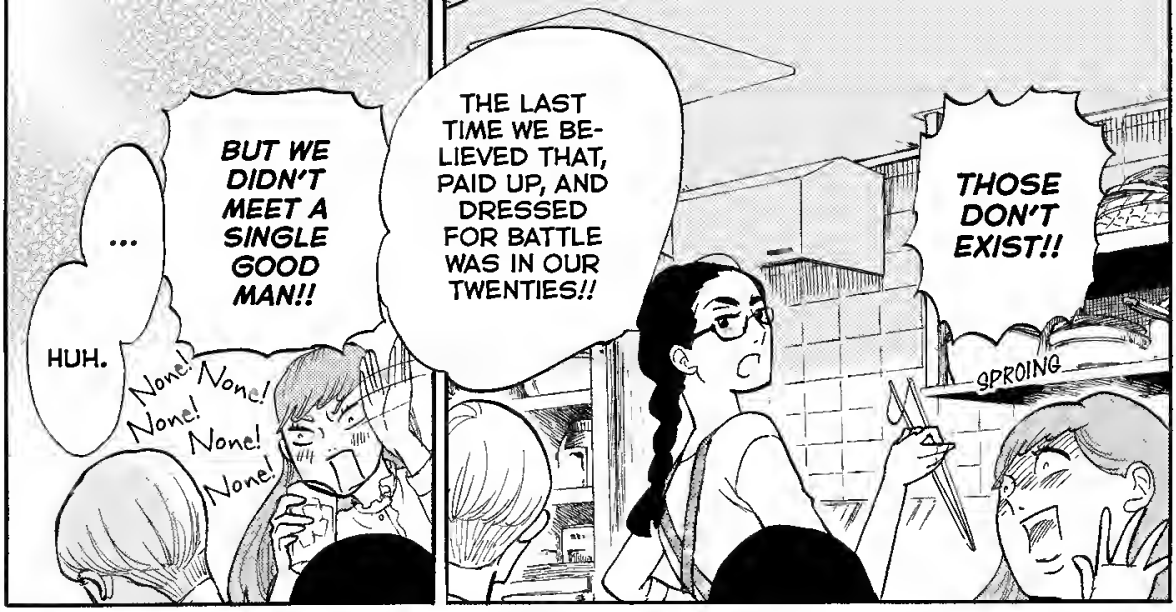
WE MISSED OUR CHANCE TO PAY AND NOW IT'S TOO LATE!!
OH, I FEEL BETTER NOW.
HUUUH?!
Because she scared me again...
YOUR SCREAMS ARE ATTRACTING AN AUDIENCE.
ガラ
THWIK
What the?

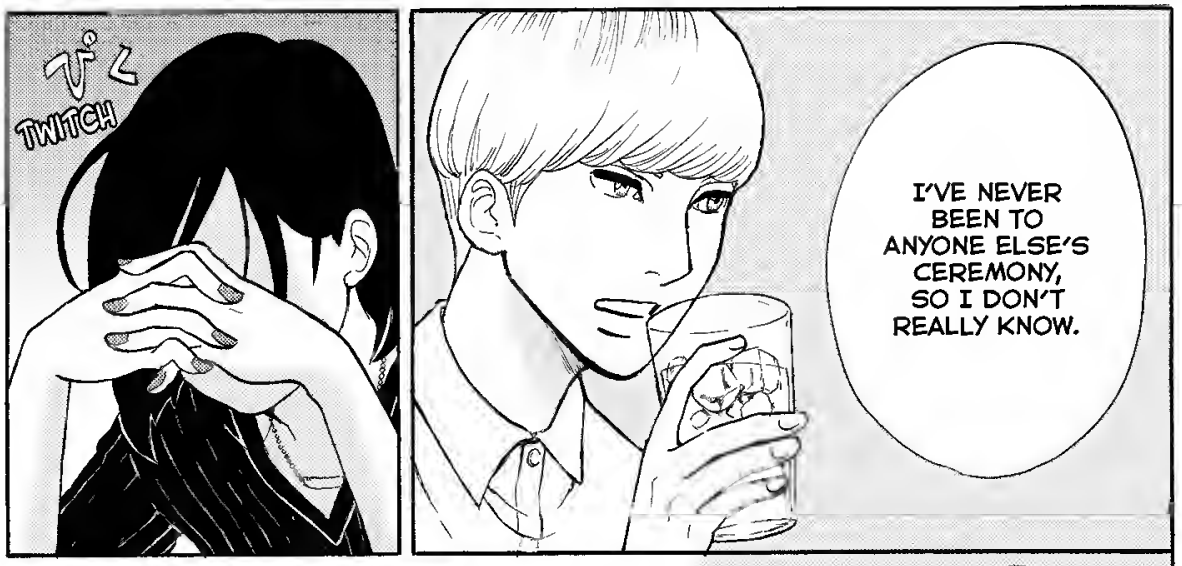
*Motsuni: a dish of stewed animal offal.


SO WE WERE ARGUING ABOUT WHETHER TO GO OR NOT.
WE GOT INVITATIONS TO THE WEDDING OF AN OLD CLASSMATE WE WERE NEVER REALLY FRIENDS WITH IN THE FIRST PLACE.
NO, IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
YEESH! BECAUSE YOU NEVER GET MARRIED YOURSELF AND KEEP GIVING OUT WEDDING GIFTS, YOU'RE WEDDING PRESENT POOR.
YOUNG PEOPLE ARE JUST FILING THE PAPERWORK THESE DAYS.
SO YOU DIDN'T?
ISN'T THAT A LITTLE SUDDEN?
"BY THE WAY"?
What the heck?

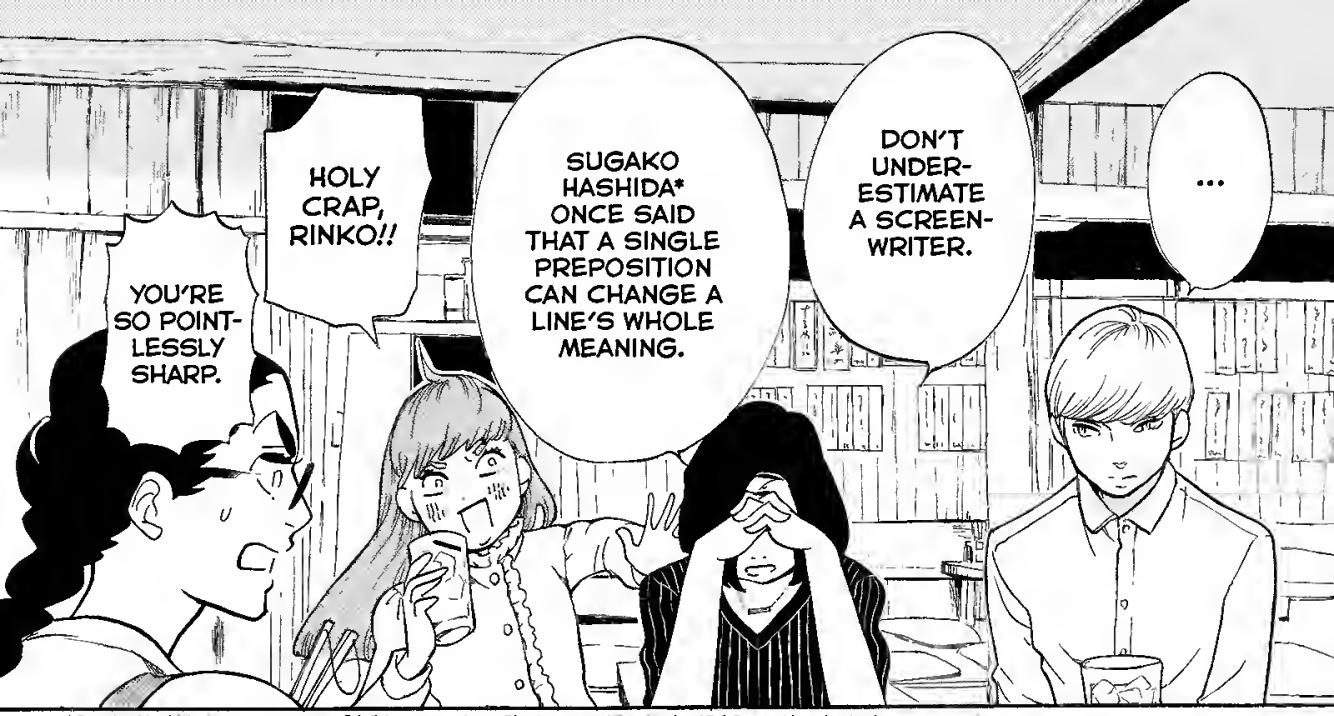
IF YOU ADD IN THE WEDDINGS OF PEOPLE I'VE DONE NAILS FOR, I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE TOTAL!!
NO, FIFTEEN?!
THAT'S RIGHT!! I'VE BEEN TO TEN...
I SUPPOSE AT YOUR AGE, THE NUMBER OF WEDDINGS YOU'VE ATTENDED IS QUITE IMPRESSIVE.
I SEE.
¥100


WHY NOT GO?
YOU MIGHT FIND SOME NICE MEN AT THE CEREMONY.
I'M THE ONE WHO TURNED HER DOWN!!
BUT WITH AGE, I'VE GOTTEN BETTER AT TURNING THEM DOWN!
HEH HEH!

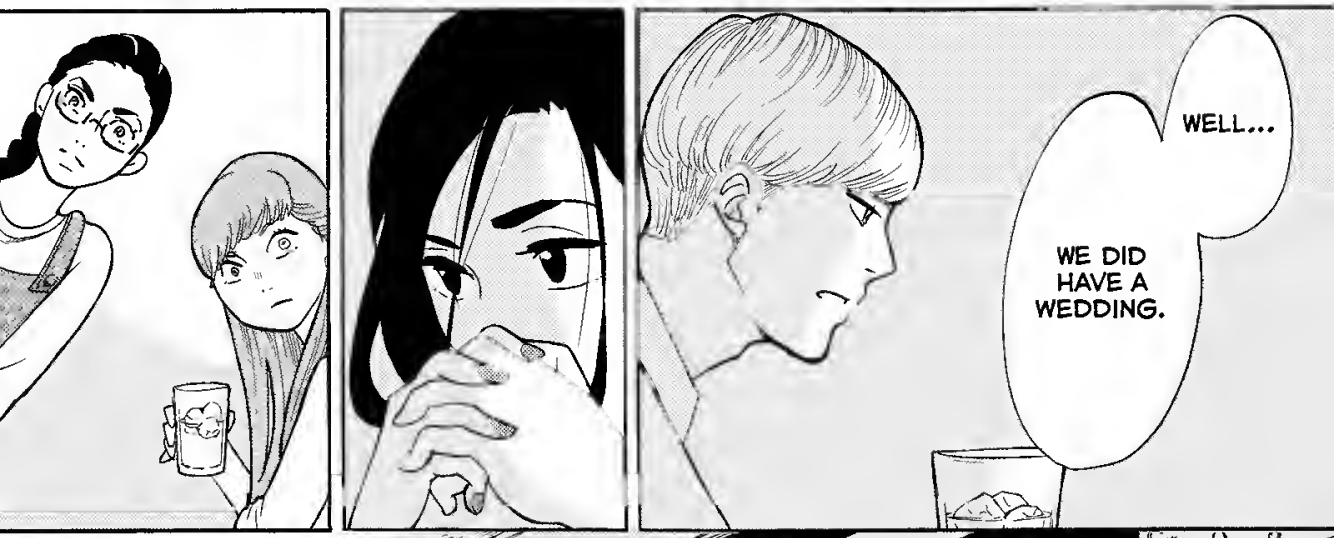

THOSE DON'T EXIST!!
SPROING
THE LAST TIME WE BELIEVED THAT, PAID UP, AND DRESSED FOR BATTLE WAS IN OUR TWENTIES!!
BUT WE DIDN'T MEET A SINGLE GOOD MAN!!
...
HUH.
None! None! None! None! None!

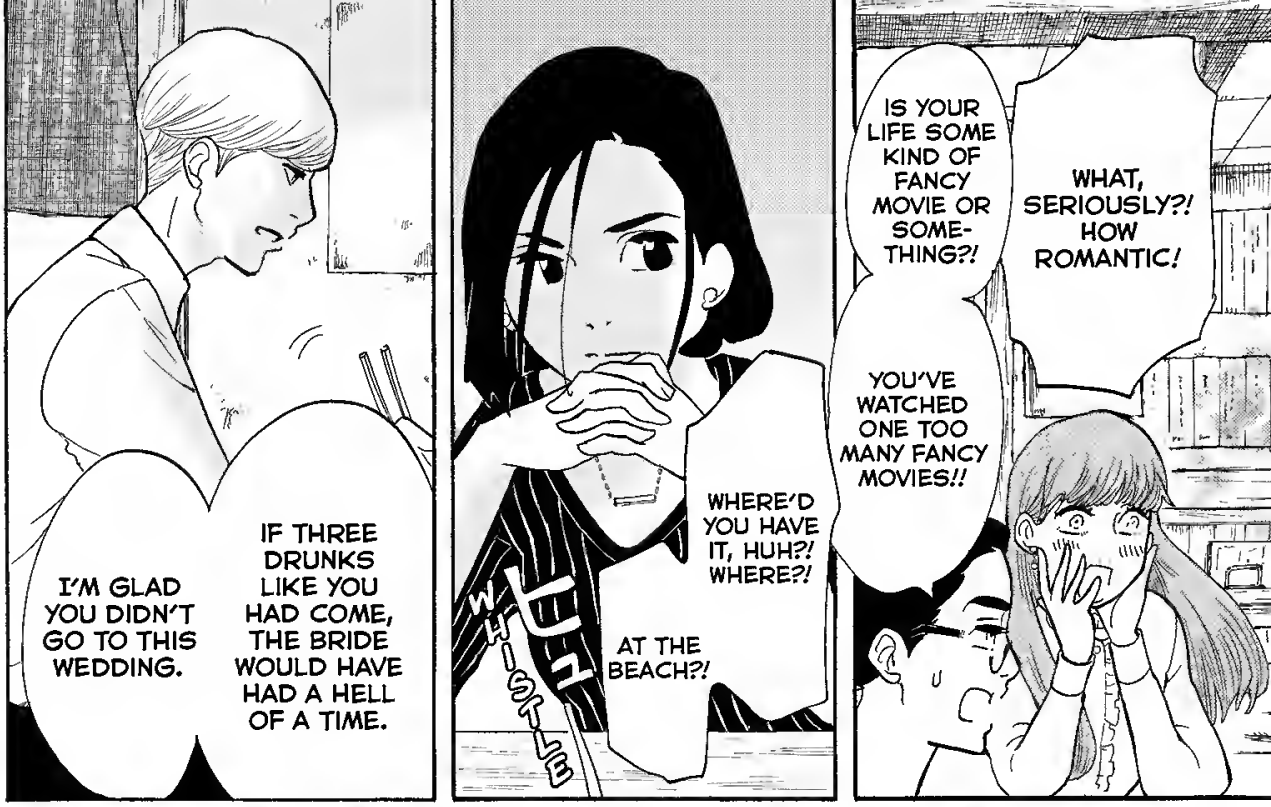

I'VE NEVER BEEN TO ANYONE ELSE'S CEREMONY, SO I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
TWITCH

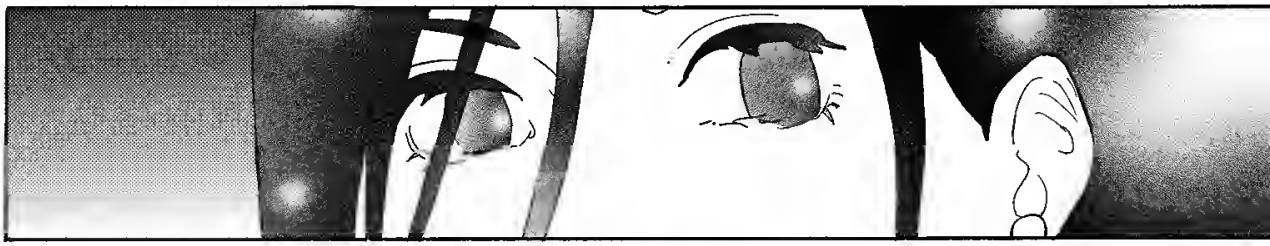
TO ANYONE
ELSE'S CEREMONY
YOU SAID?
THEN YOU DID GO TO YOUR OWN.

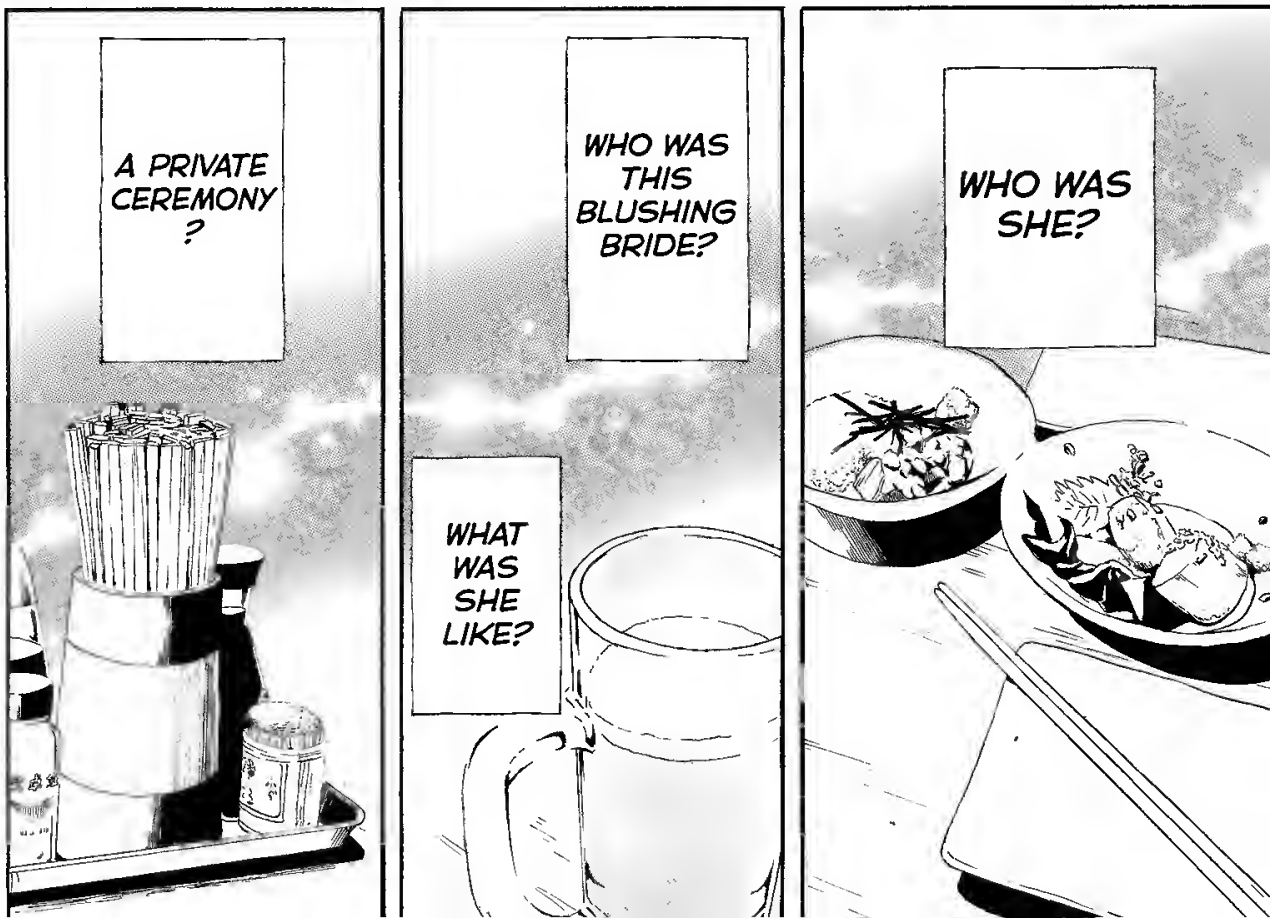

...
DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE A SCREEN-WRITER.
SUGAKO HASHIDA* ONCE SAID THAT A SINGLE PREPOSITION CAN CHANGE A LINE'S WHOLE MEANING.
HOLY CRAP, RINKO!!
YOU'RE SO POINT-LESSLY SHARP.

*Sugako Hashida is a very successful TV screenwriter. She began writing in the 1960s and has had a long career since.




I'M GLAD YOU DIDN'T GO TO THIS WEDDING.
IF THREE DRUNKS LIKE YOU HAD COME, THE BRIDE WOULD HAVE HAD A HELL OF A TIME.
WHISTLE
AT THE BEACH?!
WHERE'D YOU HAVE IT, HUH?! WHERE?!
YOU'VE WATCHED ONE TOO MANY FANCY MOVIES!!
IS YOUR LIFE SOME KIND OF FANCY MOVIE OR SOMETHING?!
WHAT, SERIOUSLY?! HOW ROMANTIC!




A PRIVATE CEREMONY ?
WHO WAS THIS BLUSHING BRIDE?
WHAT WAS SHE LIKE?
WHO WAS SHE?

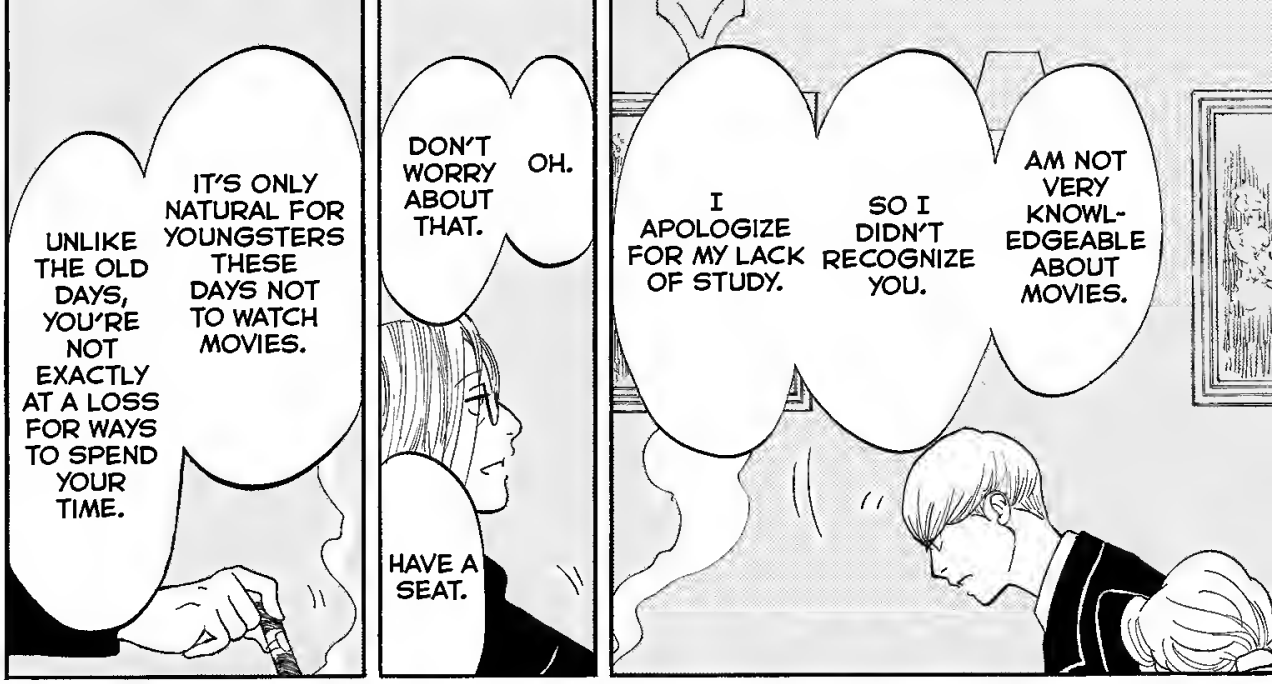
THEN WHY'D YOU SPLIT UP WITH THIS WOMAN?
HOW VERY ROMANTIC.
YOUR LITTLE PLAY MARRIAGE DIDN'T STAND THE TEST OF TIME?

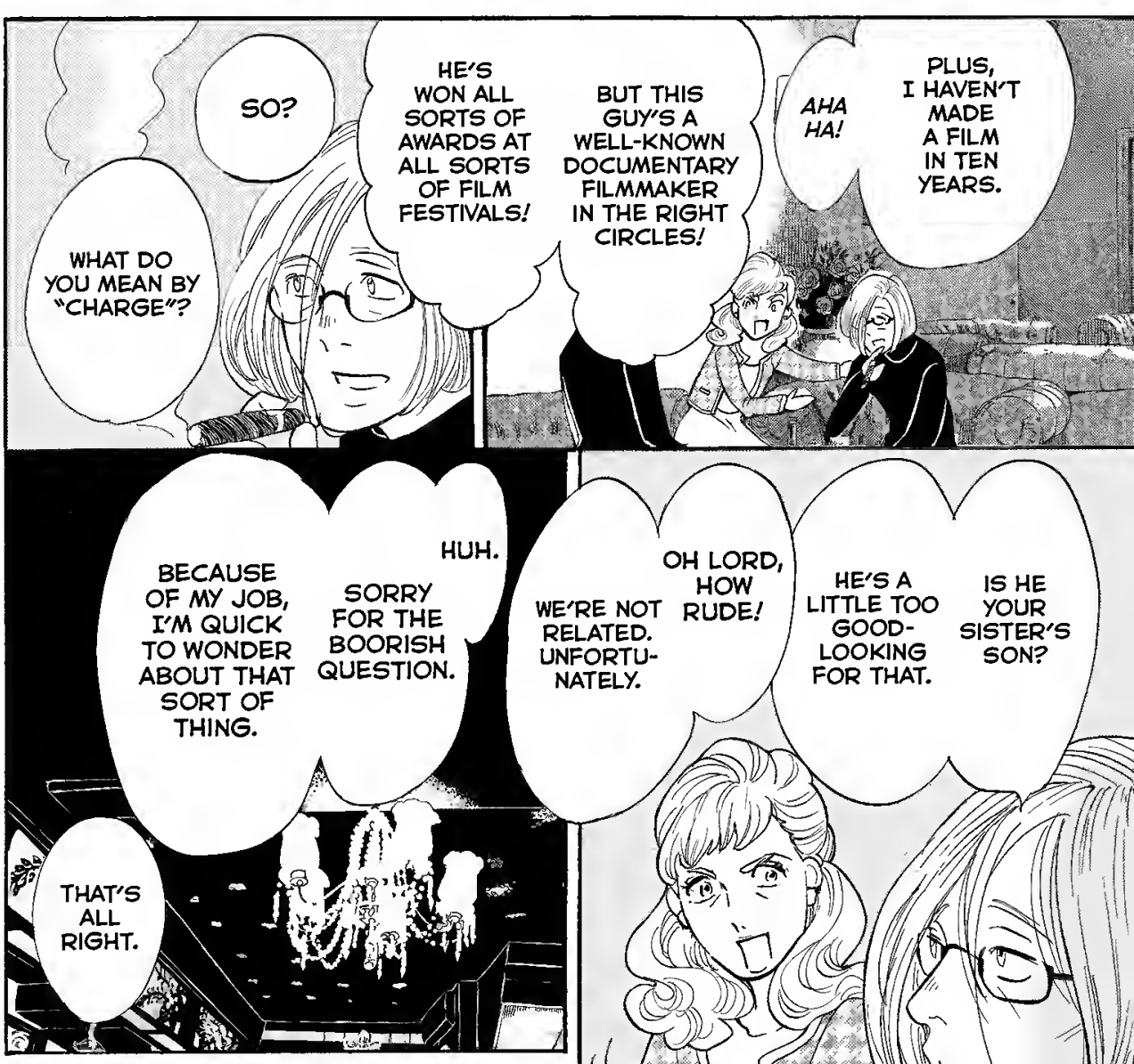
JUST ASK.
IF YOU CAN'T BRING YOURSELF TO ASK, THEN DON'T TRY TO INVESTIGATE.
DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH THOSE CURIOUS MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRL EYES.
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW, ASK ME YOURSELF.

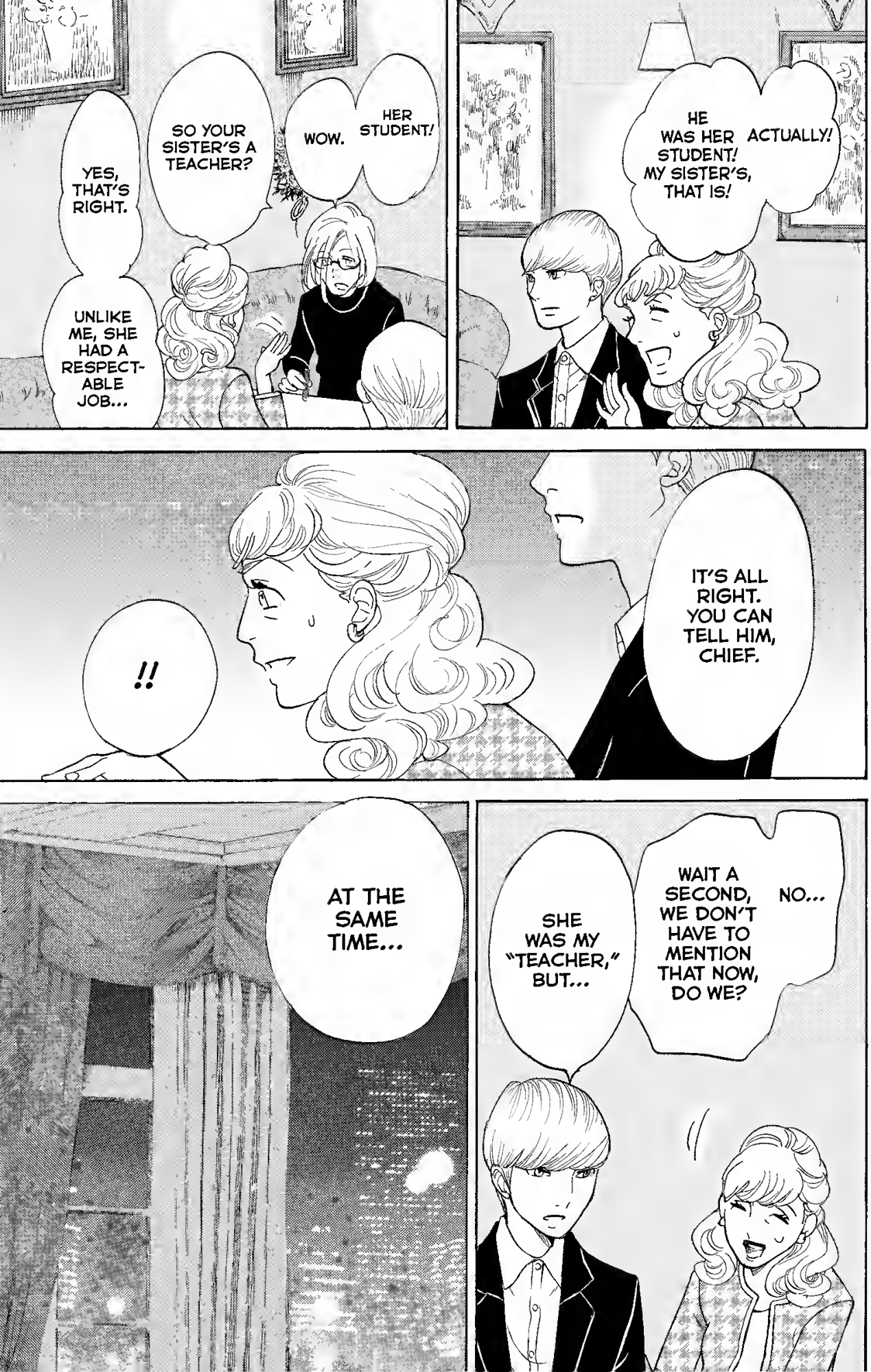
HMM?
BRRRNG
ブルルル
DID I SAY SOMETHING STRANGE AGAIN?
HMM?
...
YES, NICE TO HEAR FROM YOU.
HELLO?
OHHH! A LADY INVITING YOU OUT?
YOU STUDS ARE ALWAYS ON CALL.
THIS LOSER'S LEAVING !!
POPS!! CHECK PLEASE!!
I SUPPOSE I COULD COME...
WELL...
RIGHT NOW?
HUH?
YES, I'M ON OMOTE-SANDO AT THE MOMENT.
I'M GETTING USED TO IT.
RINKO ... YOU TOOK DAMAGE AGAIN TONIGHT, HUH...
パタン
WHAP
THUNK
ガラガラ
ピシャン
RATTLE RATTLE
BYE NOW.
THIS IS FOR WORK.
NO.

KEY!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO WEAR GLASSES AND A FACE MASK WHEN YOU GO OUT?!
HEY!!
COME IN!
STEP
STEP
OVER HERE!

I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND.
HI THERE.
I BROUGHT HIM!!
DIRECTOR!
THIS IS OUR AGENCY'S FAVORITE!
I BUMPED INTO HIM BY TOTAL CHANCE EARLIER!!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN EIGHT YEARS!!
I'M KEY, OF HER MODELING AGENCY.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
KEY! THIS IS A MASTER DIRECTOR I'VE KNOWN FOR AGES!!
NOT THAT I'VE MADE ANYTHING LATELY.
Ha ha ha...
I'M SORRY, I...
UM... CHARGE FROM MY SISTER!
OH, HE'S MY...
WHERE'D YOU FIND SUCH A PRETTY FELLOW, SHOKO?
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO INTRO-DUCE YOU TO MR. DOGOSHI.
I'M SO GLAD YOU WERE NEARBY.


I APOLOGIZE FOR MY LACK OF STUDY.
SO I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.
AM NOT VERY KNOWL-EDGEABLE ABOUT MOVIES.
OH.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
HAVE A SEAT.
UNLIKE THE OLD DAYS, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY AT A LOSS FOR WAYS TO SPEND YOUR TIME.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL FOR YOUNGSTERS THESE DAYS NOT TO WATCH MOVIES.


AHA HA!
PLUS, I HAVEN'T MADE A FILM IN TEN YEARS.
BUT THIS GUY'S A WELL-KNOWN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER IN THE RIGHT CIRCLES!
HE'S WON ALL SORTS OF AWARDS AT ALL SORTS OF FILM FESTIVALS!
SO?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "CHARGE"?
IS HE YOUR SISTER'S SON?
HE'S A LITTLE TOO GOOD-LOOKING FOR THAT.
OH LORD, HOW RUDE!
WE'RE NOT RELATED. UNFORTU-NATELY.
HUH.
SORRY FOR THE BOORISH QUESTION.
BECAUSE OF MY JOB, I'M QUICK TO WONDER ABOUT THAT SORT OF THING.
THAT'S ALL RIGHT.


HE WAS ACTUALLY! HER STUDENT! MY SISTER'S, THAT IS!
WOW. HER STUDENT!
SO YOUR SISTER'S A TEACHER?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
UNLIKE ME, SHE HAD A RESPECT-ABLE JOB...
IT'S ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN TELL HIM, CHIEF.
!!
AT THE SAME TIME...
NO... WAIT A SECOND, WE DON'T HAVE TO MENTION THAT NOW, DO WE?
SHE WAS MY "TEACHER," BUT...

SHE WAS MY WIFE.
HUH...
ONE OF THOSE TRENDY AGE-GAP MARRIAGES?
AND?
WHY DID YOU USE THE PAST TENSE?

BECAUSE SHE'S DEAD.

TOSS
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

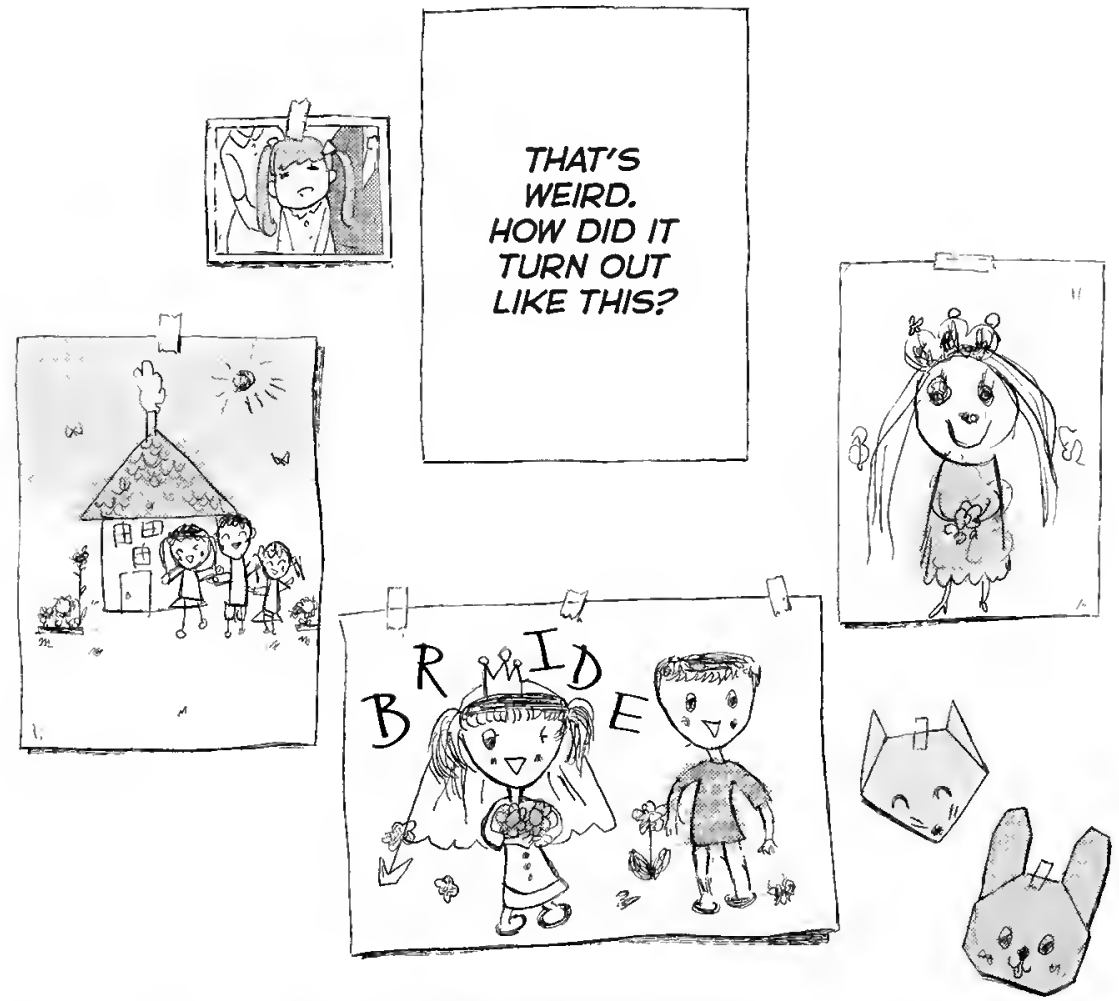
MY WIFE DIED WHEN SHE WAS 33.

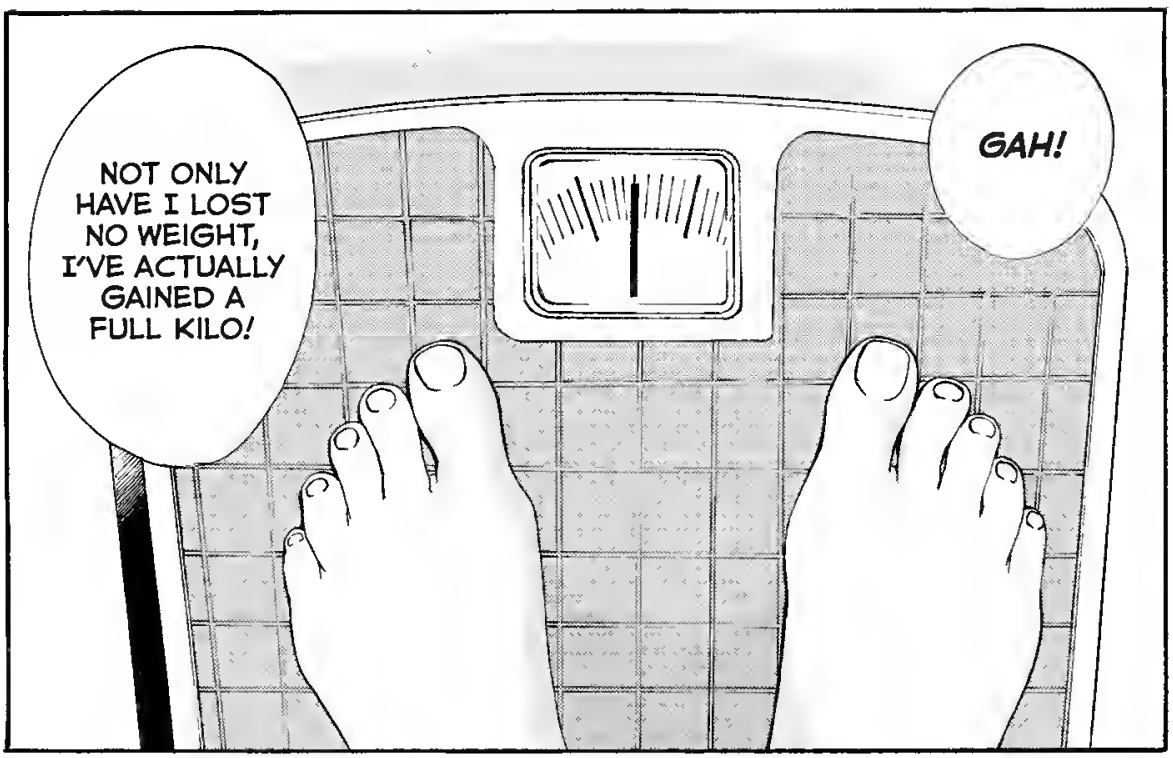
MY WIFE
DIED WHEN
SHE WAS
33.

ポ
TOSS
ゴゴ
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

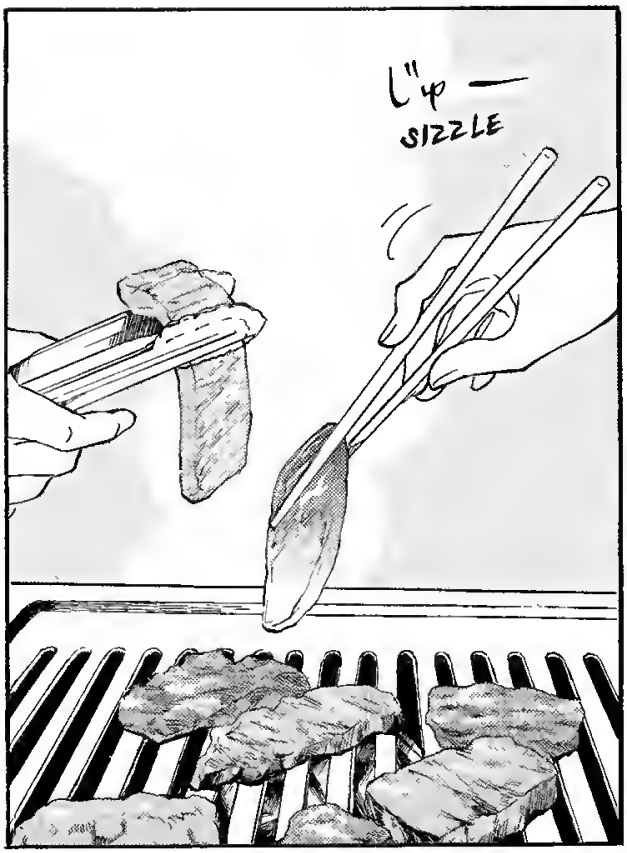
AFTER TREATING A WEDDING INVITATION FROM AN OLD CLASSMATE...
...LIKE A CHAIN LETTER...
RUSTLE
THE SELF-HATE LED ME TO THE BOTTLE ONCE AGAIN.
AHHH, TOKYO TARAREBA GIRLS.

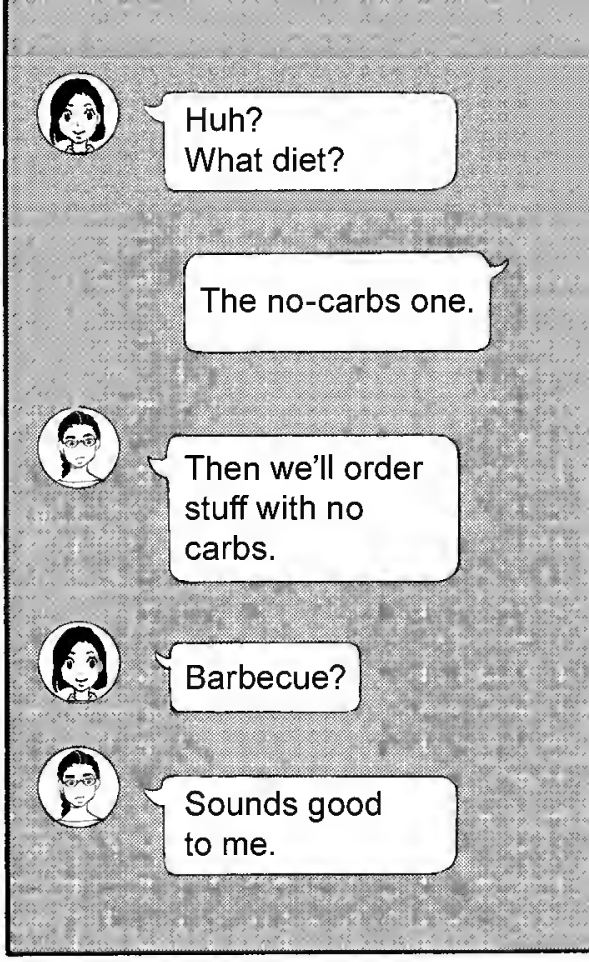
ACT
19
PREDICTION GIRLS


THAT'S WEIRD. HOW DID IT TURN OUT LIKE THIS?
BRIDE


NOT ONLY HAVE I LOST NO WEIGHT, I'VE ACTUALLY GAINED A FULL KILO!
GAH!

I GUESS IT'S TRUE THAT IT'S HARD TO LOSE WEIGHT WHEN YOU'RE OVER THIRTY...
BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN EATING CARBS FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS!
WHAT THE HECK?
SIGH... I GUESS IT'S NO USE...
I'LL HAVE TO EXERCISE...
JING-A-LING
Greetings, ladies. You free tonight?
Wanna grab dinner?
GAH!
THE DEVIL IS ALREADY TEMPTING ME...
I'm currently on a diet...


じゅー
SIZZLE

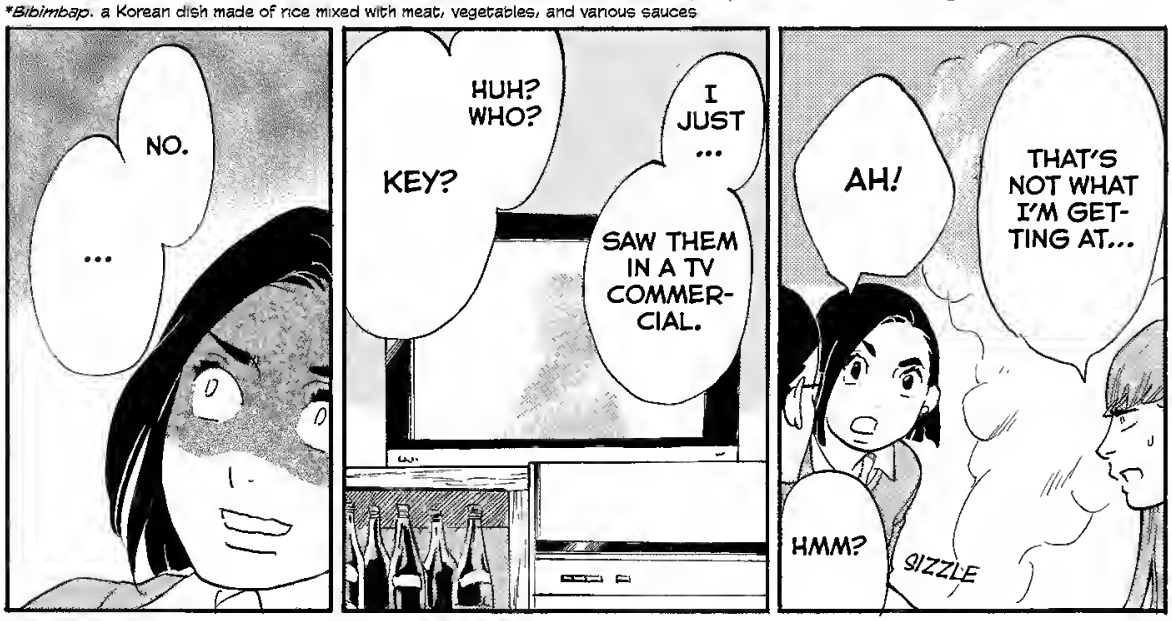

Huh?
What diet?
The no-carbs one.
Then we'll order stuff with no carbs.
Barbecue?
Sounds good to me.

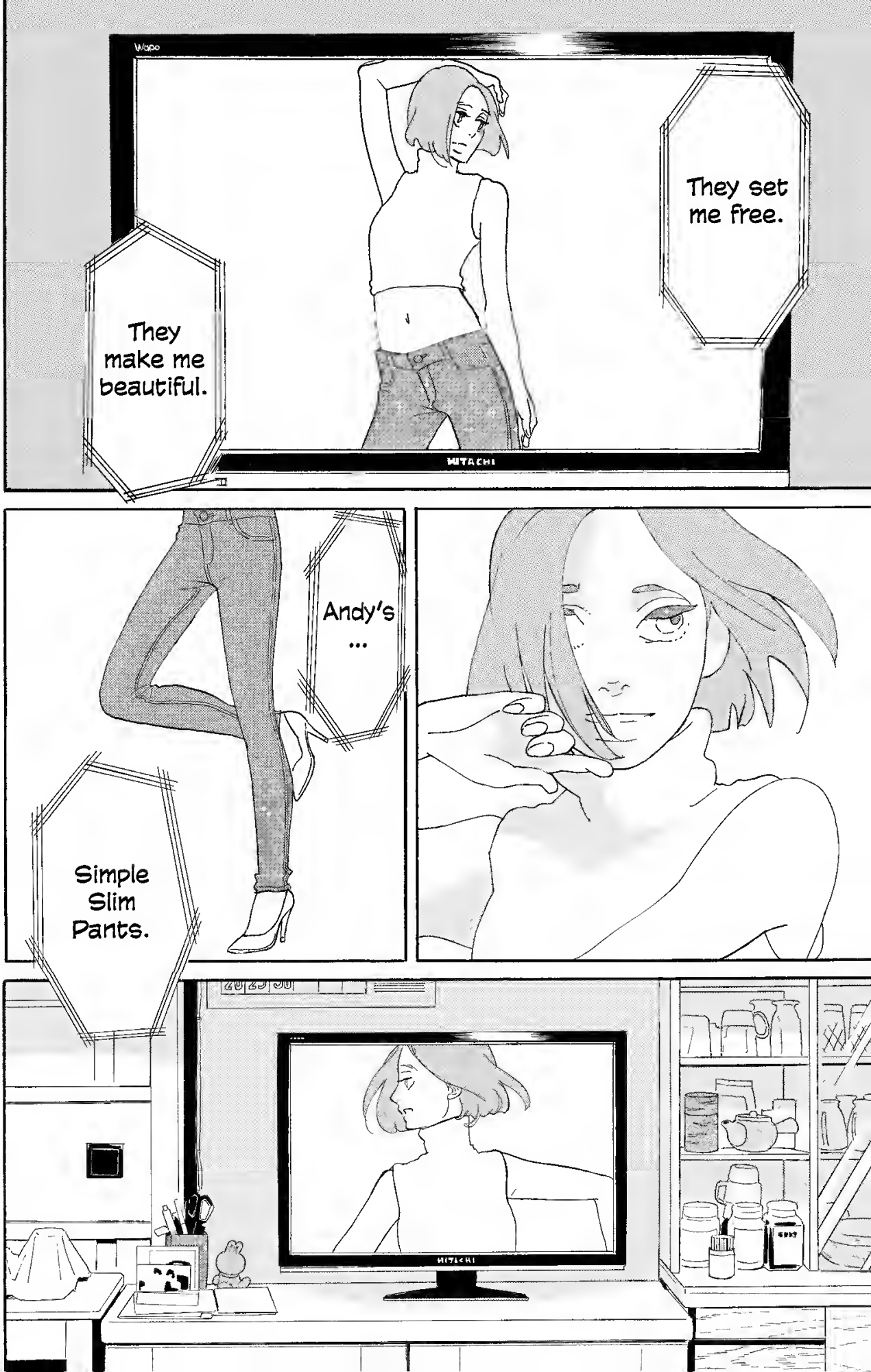
¥1200
タ
ホ
ピー
カシラ
ハツ
レバ
マ
センマイ
モツ煮
モロ
ニン
冷やしト
BUT YOU'RE NOT FAT ANYWAY, KAORI!!

CHOMP
CHOMP
YOU WERE TOO SKINNY BACK THEN! YOU MAY HAVE GAINED WEIGHT SINCE HIGH SCHOOL, BUT YOU'RE STILL A LOT SLIMMER THAN AVERAGE!
WE ONLY MEANT COMPARED TO WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER!!
AREN'T YOU THE ONES WHO TOLD ME I'D GAINED WEIGHT AT THE HOT SPRINGS THE OTHER DAY?!
HERE'S THE PREMIUM HANGER STEAK YOU ORDERED, LADIES.

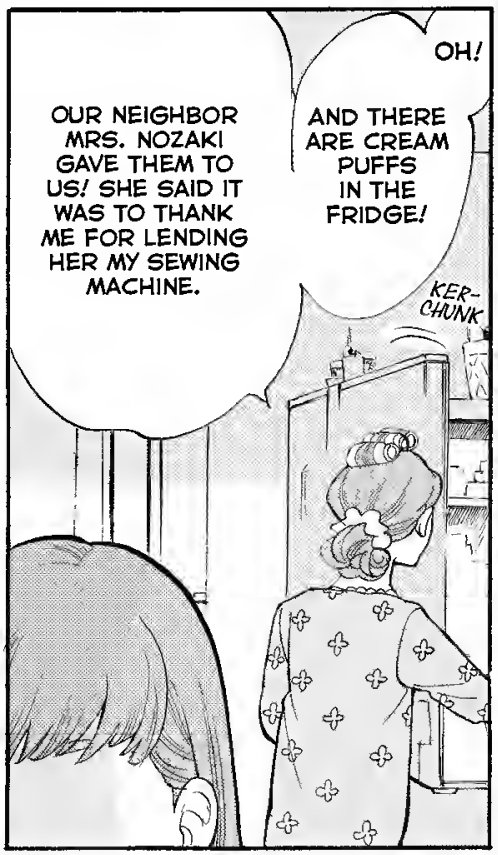
I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT EATING CARBS!!
WANNA GO IN FOR A ONE PERSON, ONE BOWL BIBIMBAP* ORDER?
I'm gonna put it on your plate...
SO DIG IN! EAT UP!
THEN, YOU WANT TO SPLIT IT?
SIZZLE
THEY DON'T SERVE MILT, BUT THERE'S PLENTY OF LIVER.
SIZZLE

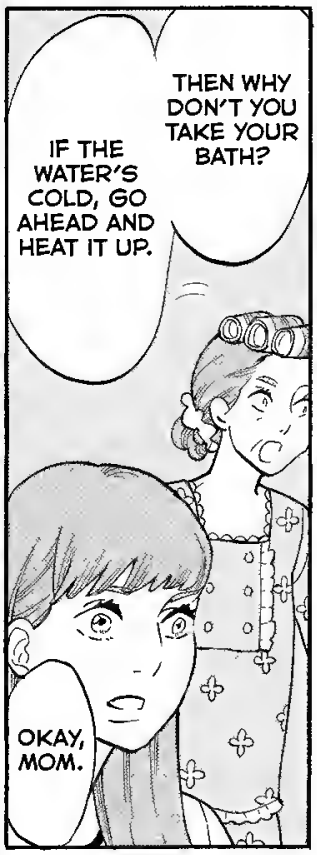
*Bibimbap: a Korean dish made of rice mixed with meat, vegetables, and various sauces




Wapo
They make me beautiful.
They set me free.
HITACHI
Andy's ...
Simple Slim Pants.
HITACHI

KER-CHUNK
OH, YOU'RE BACK, KAORI?


OH!
OUR NEIGHBOR MRS. NOZAKI GAVE THEM TO US! SHE SAID IT WAS TO THANK ME FOR LENDING HER MY SEWING MACHINE.
AND THERE ARE CREAM PUFFS IN THE FRIDGE!
KER-CHUNK


THEN WHY DON'T YOU TAKE YOUR BATH?
IF THE WATER'S COLD, GO AHEAD AND HEAT IT UP.
OKAY, MOM.

DID YOU EAT? I MADE CURRY.
I ATE WITH RINKO AND KOYUKI...
OH, YOU DID?

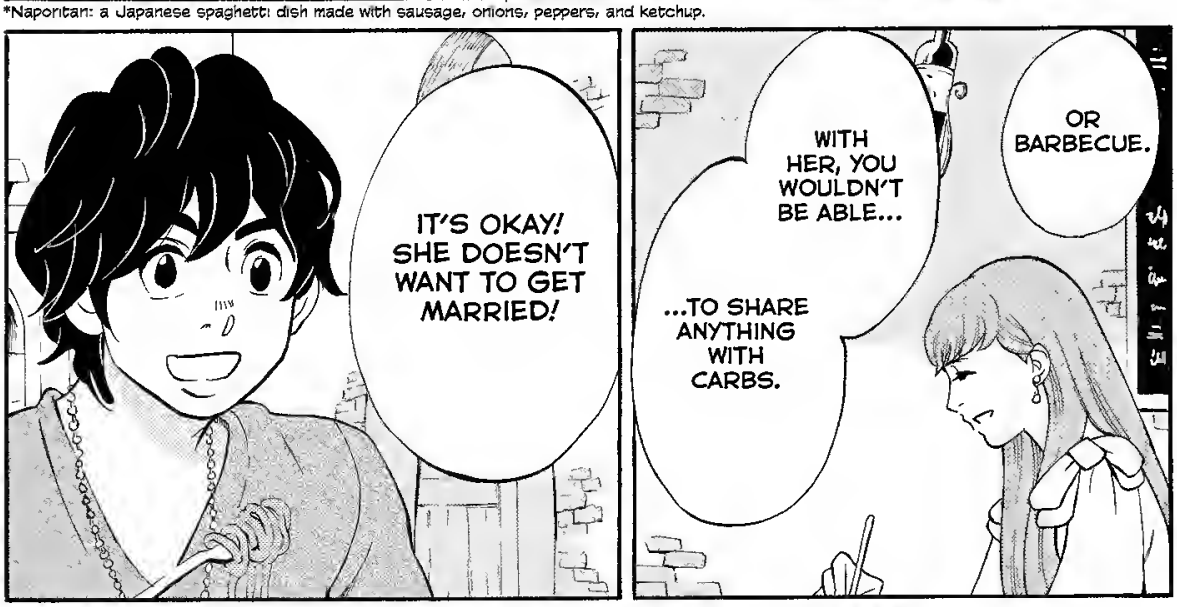
WELL, I'M GOING TO BED!
DON'T FORGET TO TURN OFF THE AIR CONDITIONER!
SHE SAID THEY'RE FROM THAT FAMOUS PLACE IN GINZA! I SAW THEM ON TV.
HERE, THIS ONE'S YOURS.
33, SINGLE.
LIVING WITH MY MOM.
I'M THE SECOND WOMAN...
...OF A MUSICIAN WHO'S DATING A MODEL.
AND...

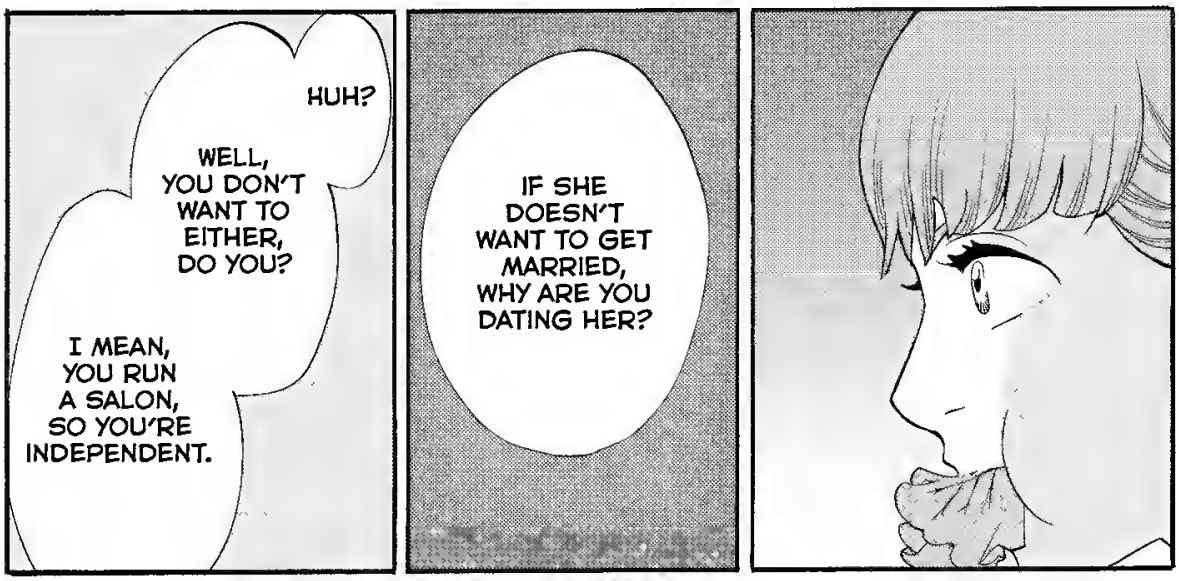
...BUT EVEN I'VE REALIZED I'M IN PRETTY DIRE STRAIGHTS.
I MAY BE STUPID AND OPTIMISTIC ...
HUH?
YOU DON'T WANT ANY UNI PASTA?
NO.
I'M JUST GOING TO HAVE SALAD TODAY.
WHY?
YOU ALWAYS GET THE UNI PASTA WHEN WE COME HERE!

I JUST DON'T HAVE MUCH OF AN APPETITE...
MUNCH MUNCH
WHAT THE HECK?
COME ON! DIG IN! I LIKE SEEING YOU CHOW DOWN ON PASTA!
CRUNCH CRUNCH
REALLY?
WHY?
WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S CUTE.

IT'S HARD DATING A MODEL.
SHE DOESN'T EAT, AND IF I BUY CAKE FOR HER, SHE GIVES ME THE EVIL EYE.
IN FACT, JUST THE OTHER DAY...
THEN YOUR GIRLFRIEND ISN'T CUTE?
BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T EAT...
EXACTLY.
SOMEONE BROUGHT US THESE REALLY GOOD CREAM PUFFS FROM GINZA DURING A RECORDING SESSION...
AND THEY WERE SO GOOD, I TOOK ONE HOME FOR HER...
BUT SHE YELLED AT ME TO NEVER BRING THAT PIG FOOD HOME AGAIN.
Ha ha ha!
...I KNOW THOSE CREAM PUFFS.
THEY'RE SUPER GOOD.
OH, REALLY?
I KNOW, RIGHT? AREN'T THEY GREAT?
THE OUTSIDE'S COVERED IN SUGAR AND THE CREAM INSIDE TASTES LIKE CONDENSED MILK...
RYO.

*Naporitan: a Japanese spaghetti dish made with sausage, onions, peppers, and ketchup.




HUH?
WELL, YOU DON'T WANT TO EITHER, DO YOU?
I MEAN, YOU RUN A SALON, SO YOU'RE INDEPENDENT.
IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO GET MARRIED, WHY ARE YOU DATING HER?

I MAY RUN THE PLACE, BUT I HAD TO GET THE MONEY TO OPEN IT FROM MY DAD, AND I'M BARELY IN THE BLACK EVERY MONTH.
MY GIRL-FRIEND'S MAKING TONS OF MONEY AS A MODEL TOO.
RYO, ARE YOU LISTEN-ING TO ME?
I DEFINITELY LIKE WOMEN WHO MAKE THEIR OWN MONEY WITHOUT RELYING ON THEIR MAN!
BUT YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED EVENTUALLY, DON'T YOU?
YEP!
I DO WANT KIDS ONE DAY!
HUH ...
SO YOU WANT KIDS.
WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT?
WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I WAS ALL CAUGHT UP IN MYSELF, BUT NOW THAT I'M OVER THIRTY...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS...
BUT THE OLDER MUSICIANS WITH KIDS...
THEY TALK ABOUT WRITING SONGS FOR THEIR KIDS, AND IT SOUNDS SO GREAT.
AND THEY INVITE THEIR WIVES AND KIDS TO THEIR SHOWS...

♫ THERE ON THE BEACH... WHERE THE WAVES SWOOP UNDER YOUR RUNNING FEET...
YOU'D DROWN, RIGHT?
WAIT, ISN'T WAVES SWOOPING YOUR FEET WEIRD?
♫ LA-LAH...
♫ HMM-HMM-HMM...
I'M GETTING AN IDEA FOR A SONG!
OH!
FWIP
WE COULD, LIKE, LIVE BY THE SEA AND GO ON WALKS WITH THE KIDS EVERY DAY...
MAYBE IN, LIKE, SHONAN.

Note: *Konnyaku*: a firm gelatin made from the Konjac plant.
Burdock: an edible root vegetable popular in Japanese cuisine.
Motsuni: a dish of stewed offal. Generally beef offal, but pork and chicken are also popular.

Note: Taro is a type of edible tuber plant.

TMP
TMP
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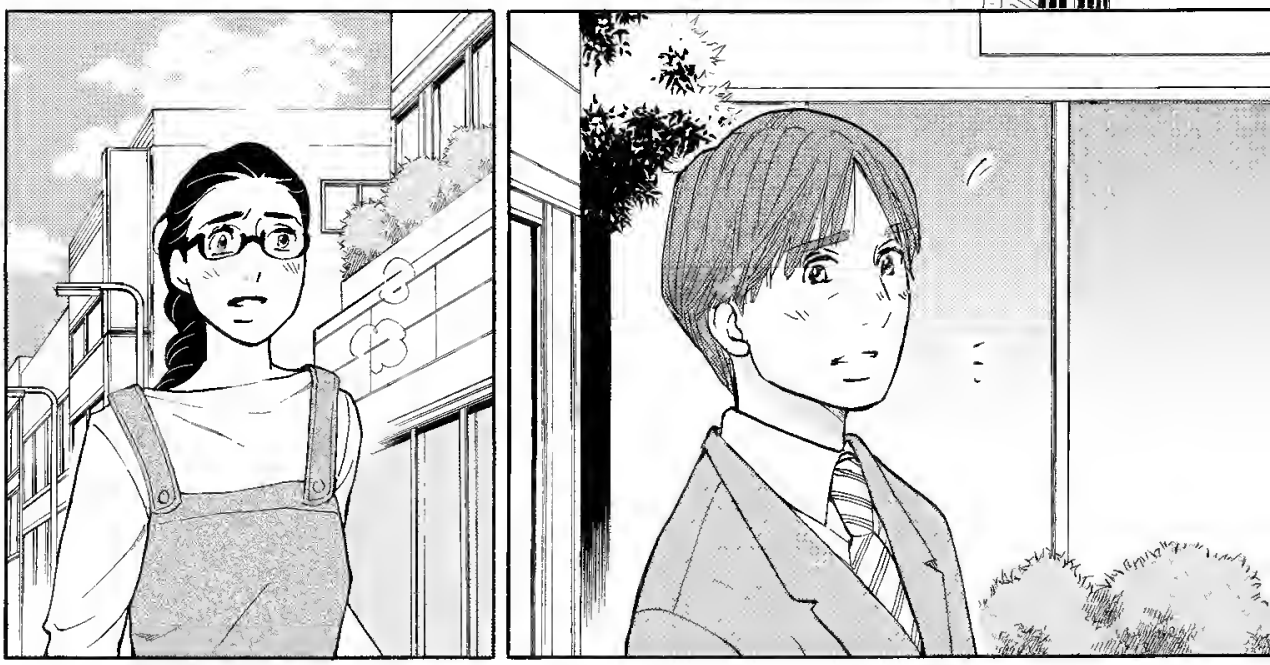
JUKUst
HARAJUKU



TO MAKE UP FOR THAT MISSED HOT SPRINGS TRIP.
HUH?
I WANTED TO GIVE YOU YOUR SOUVENIR.
Why don't we go in here?
YOU SCARED ME...
OUT OF THE BLUE...
DON'T JUST DO THAT...
SORRY.

I'M SORRY.
I'VE GOT NO SENSE OF STYLE, SO I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS...
BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD LOOK GOOD ON YOU.
I'M REALLY SORRY.
I'M SORRY.
KOYUKI.
DON'T DO THIS SORT OF THING...

STOP THAT.
DON'T BOW AT ME...
I... SCHEDULED A DAY OFF DURING NEXT WEEK.
LET'S GO.
TO THE HOT SPRINGS.
WHUMP
THEY'LL BE LESS CROWDED DURING THE WEEK ANYWAY.
SO LET'S SPLURGE A LITTLE AND STAY SOMEPLACE NICE.
...
BUT I DON'T–
KOYUKI.
TRY IT ON.
HERE, I'LL PUT IT ON YOU.
LET ME SEE IT.
NO!
NO! STOP IT!
I DON'T WANT THIS!
OR TO GO TO THE HOT SPRINGS EITHER! NOT NOW!

I DECIDED TO BREAK UP WITH YOU!
I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP WITH YOU.
I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP.
...
NO.

*Tsuchinoko: a creature from Japanese folklore resembling a fat snake.

...
HUH?
BUT THEY WERE FIGHTING IN THE ALLEY ABOUT WHETHER TO BREAK UP OR NOT...
KOYUKI...
...AND THAT SALARYMAN WHO'S ALWAYS COMING IN.
HUH?
THOSE TWO ARE AN ITEM...
THOSE TWO...
YAMA...
POPS!
SUPPORT KOYUKI SO SHE CAN FINALLY GET MARRIED!!
HUH?
REMIND ME. WAS THAT CUSTOMER SINGLE?

LEAVE.
...
NO WAY!
PLEASE GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE.
FORGIVE ME, KOYUKI.
...
FINE...
I WON'T GO AWAY UNTIL YOU AGREE TO GO TO THE HOT SPRINGS WITH ME NEXT WEEK.
I'LL GO.
IF YOU MAKE THIS OUR FAREWELL TRIP...

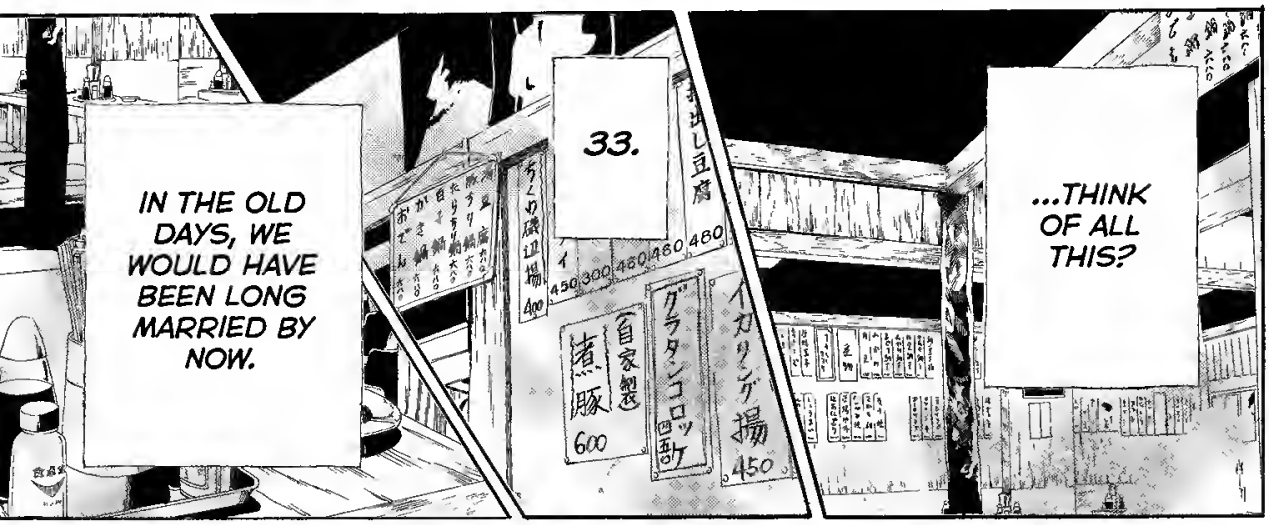
I LOVE YOU!
SMOOCH
HUH?
I'LL TEXT YOU WHEN I FIND A GOOD INN!
WELL!
I WON'T BREAK UP WITH YOU, BUT...
LET'S GO!!
OKAY!
SLUMP
...
SIGH...
IT'S NO USE.
TMP
TMP
TMP
WHOA!
OOPS.
OH!
...
I'M BACK.
THUNK
PUB
WHERE DOES THAT INNOCENCE COME FROM?
WASN'T HIS WIFE IN TROUBLE?

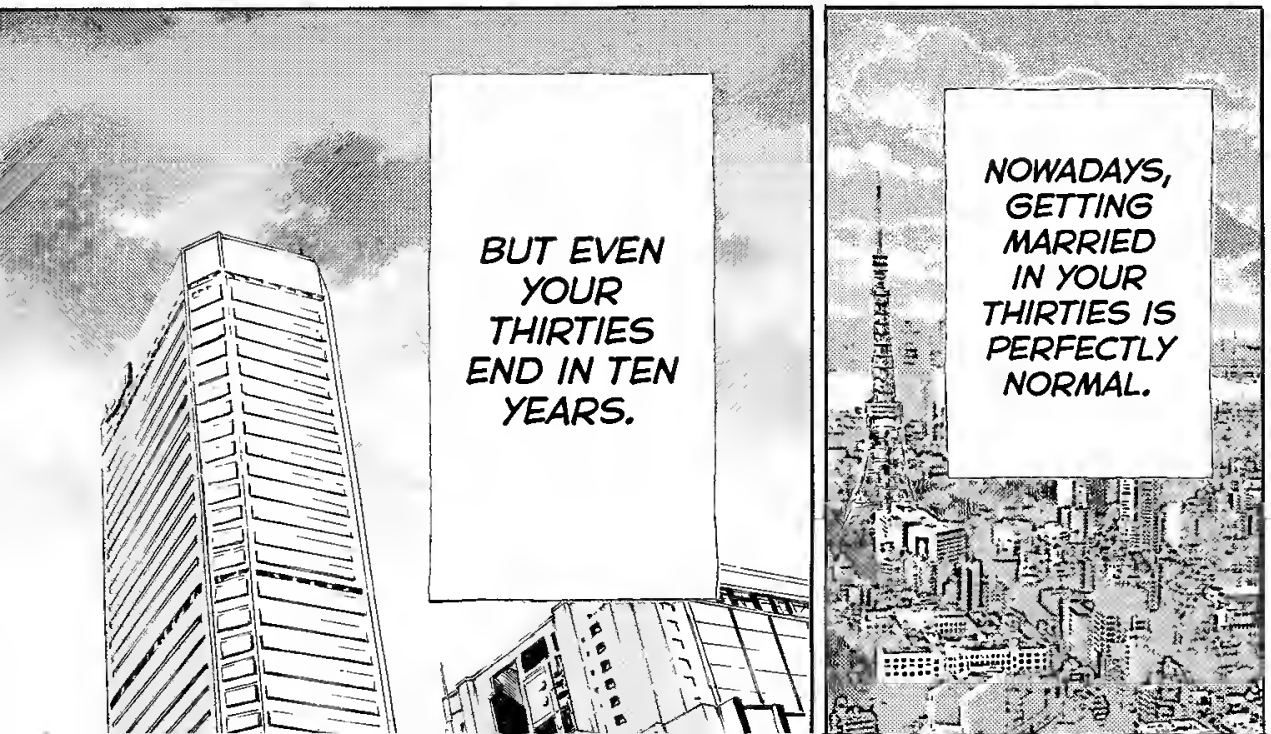
I'LL THINK OF A WAY FOR YOU TO BE HAPPY!
ALL RIGHT! I'LL BE BACK TONIGHT!
HUH?!
HUH?!
PAT
A WOMAN'S AT HER BEST WHEN SHE'S HONEST!
DON'T BE STUB-BORN!
WHAT? ARE YOU DRUNK ALREADY?
WHAP
KOYUKI!
I'LL BE ROOTIN' FOR YA!
HUH?!
CLENCH
YEAH.
I'M BACK.
ガラ ラ
THUNK
THESE DRUNKS DRIVE ME CRAZY...
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
THEY WERE OUT AT THE SUPER-MARKET.
OH, SORRY.
I'LL TAKE MY BICYCLE TO YOTSUYA LATER TO GET SOME.
FIND ANY GOOD MACKEREL?

JUST WALK AWAY, KOYUKI.
GLUB GLUB
THAT GUY ISN'T SINGLE, IS HE?
I DON'T EXACTLY HAVE A LOT OF ROOM TO TALK...
BUT JUST WALK AWAY.
GLUB GLUB
MEN ARE IDIOTS.
ALTHOUGH MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT FROM ME...

KOYUKI.
AND NOW THAT I'M AN ADULT, I'VE STARTED THINKING IT WAS MOM'S FAULT FOR NOT FORGIVING YOU.
...THERE ARE TONS OF COUPLES WHO DIVORCE BECAUSE OF CHEATING NOW.
THAT WAS YEARS AGO, RIGHT?
I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY.
...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND YOU'RE NOT GET-TING ANY YOUNGER.

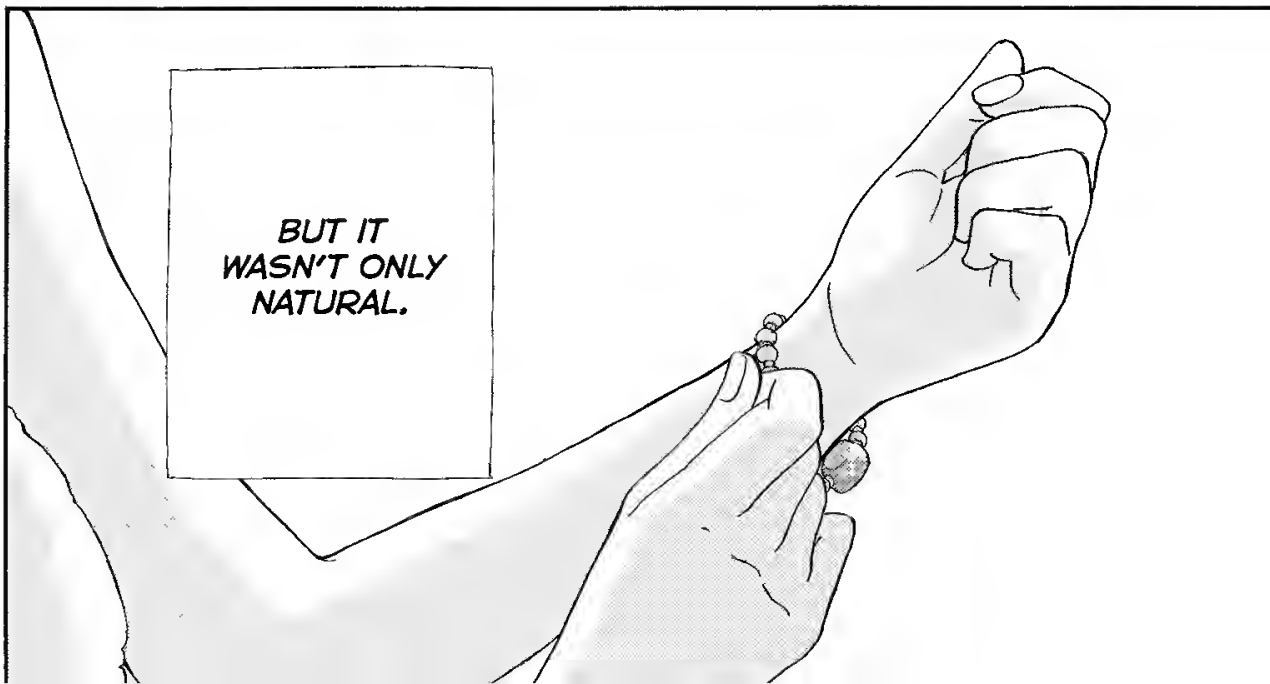
I WONDER WHAT OUR PARENTS, WHO'VE GOTTEN GRAYER RIGHT UNDER OUR EYES...
DON'T WORRY.
IT'S ALREADY OVER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.


IN THE OLD DAYS, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN LONG MARRIED BY NOW.
33.
...THINK OF ALL THIS?


BUT EVEN YOUR THIRTIES END IN TEN YEARS.
NOWADAYS, GETTING MARRIED IN YOUR THIRTIES IS PERFECTLY NORMAL.

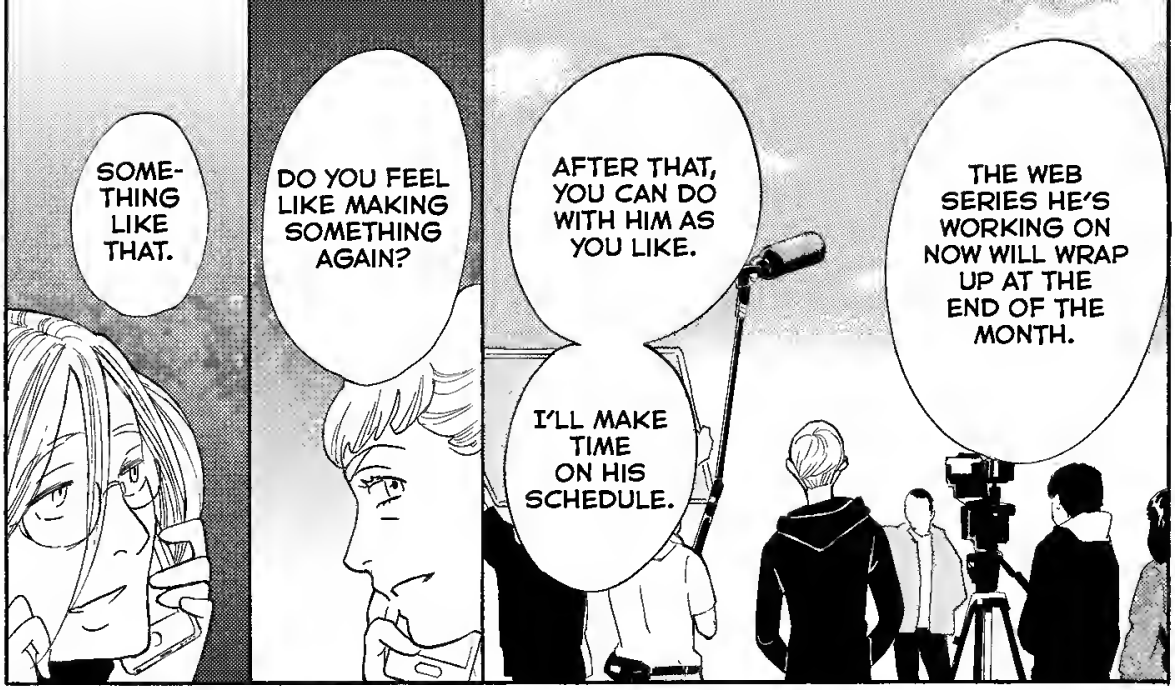
I HAVE TO OPEN MY EYES.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE LIKE THIS.
ギィ
CREAK

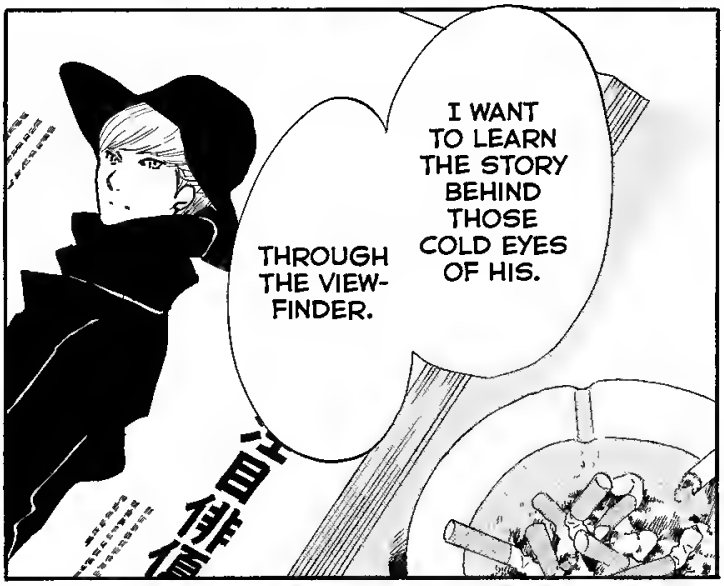
AND IT WAS ONLY NATURAL I WOULD HAVE KIDS.
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I THOUGHT IT WAS ONLY NATURAL I WOULD GET MARRIED WHEN I GREW UP.


BUT IT WASN'T ONLY NATURAL.

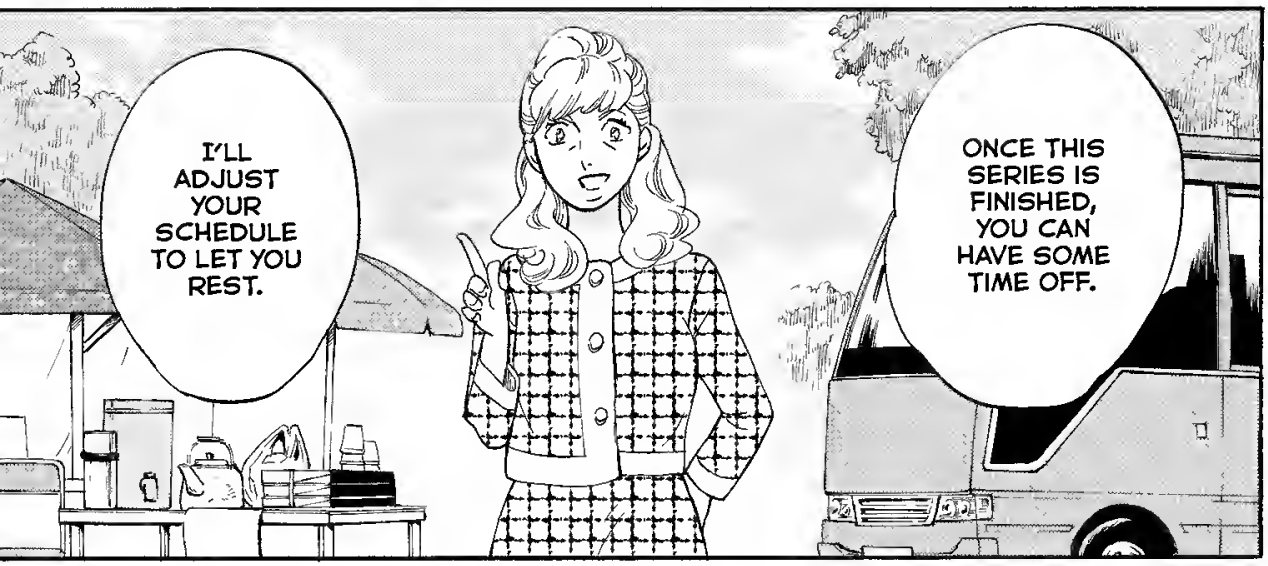
TO FIND THE PERSON YOU LOVE AND GET MARRIED.
A NORMAL FUTURE.
TO HAVE AN ORDINARY BUT HAPPY FAMILY.
BUT TO US, THAT NORMAL ACT...

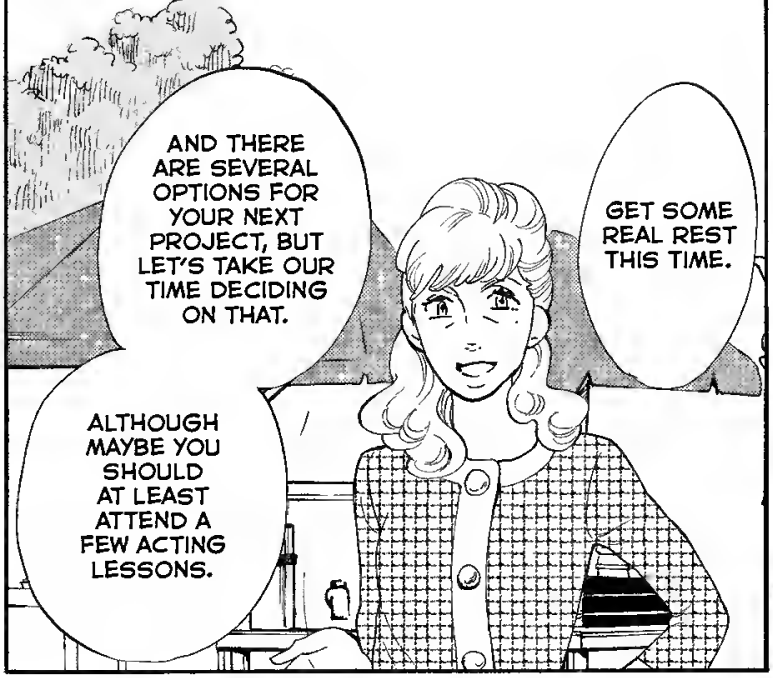
...WOULD NOW BE A MIRACLE.
OH. CHIEF?
I'VE DECIDED TO PURSUE THAT BOY A LITTLE.
OH, GOOD!
THEN YOU'RE INTERESTED, MR. DIRECTOR?
Something like that.


THE WEB SERIES HE'S WORKING ON NOW WILL WRAP UP AT THE END OF THE MONTH.
AFTER THAT, YOU CAN DO WITH HIM AS YOU LIKE.
I'LL MAKE TIME ON HIS SCHEDULE.
DO YOU FEEL LIKE MAKING SOMETHING AGAIN?
SOME-THING LIKE THAT.


I WANT TO LEARN THE STORY BEHIND THOSE COLD EYES OF HIS.
THROUGH THE VIEW-FINDER.

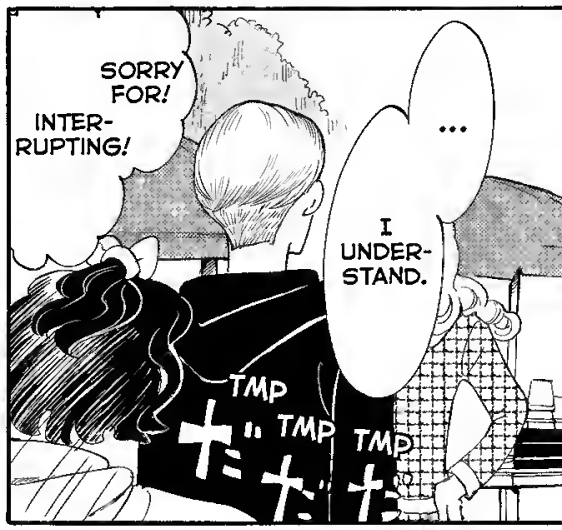
KEY!


ONCE THIS SERIES IS FINISHED, YOU CAN HAVE SOME TIME OFF.
I'LL ADJUST YOUR SCHEDULE TO LET YOU REST.


AND THERE ARE SEVERAL OPTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT PROJECT, BUT LET'S TAKE OUR TIME DECIDING ON THAT.
GET SOME REAL REST THIS TIME.
ALTHOUGH MAYBE YOU SHOULD AT LEAST ATTEND A FEW ACTING LESSONS.

...
REALLY?
THAT'S GREAT.

ARE YOU THE CEO OF MR. KEY'S AGENCY?! ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF!!
I'M THE SCREEN-WRITER, MAMI SHIBATA.
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU!

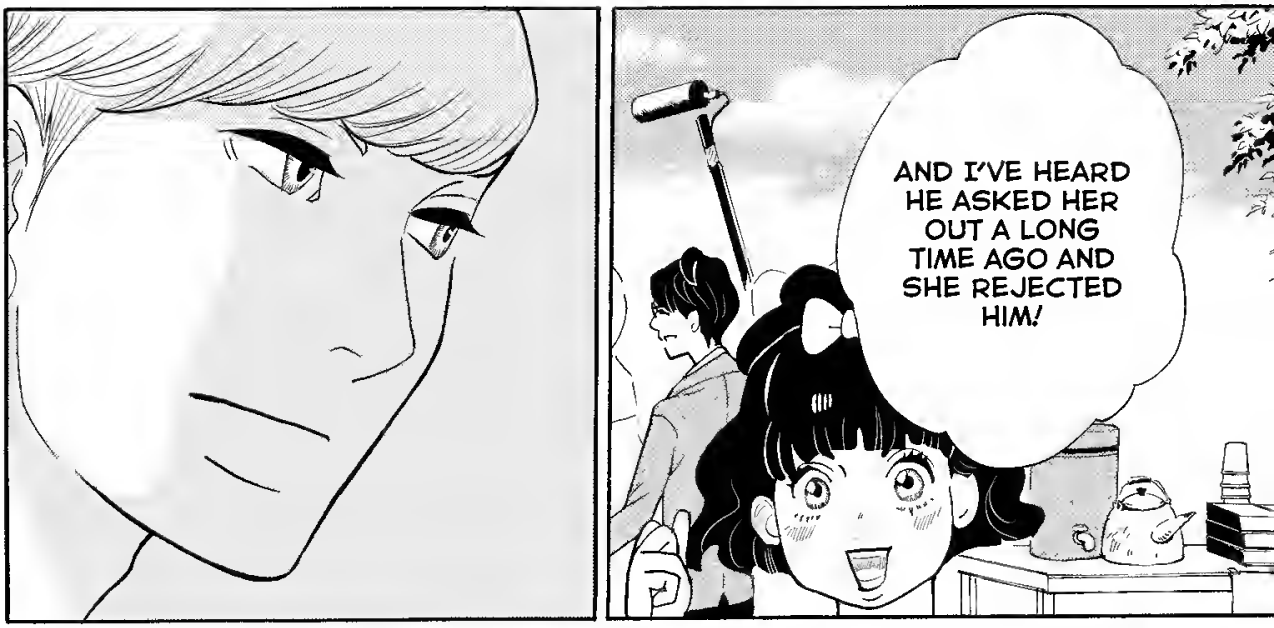

SORRY FOR! INTER-RUPTING!
...
I UNDER-STAND.
TMP
TMP
TMP

YOU'RE NICE AND DIRECT FOR YOUR AGE TOO.
AND YOU'RE ENER-GETIC!
YES, MA'AM !!

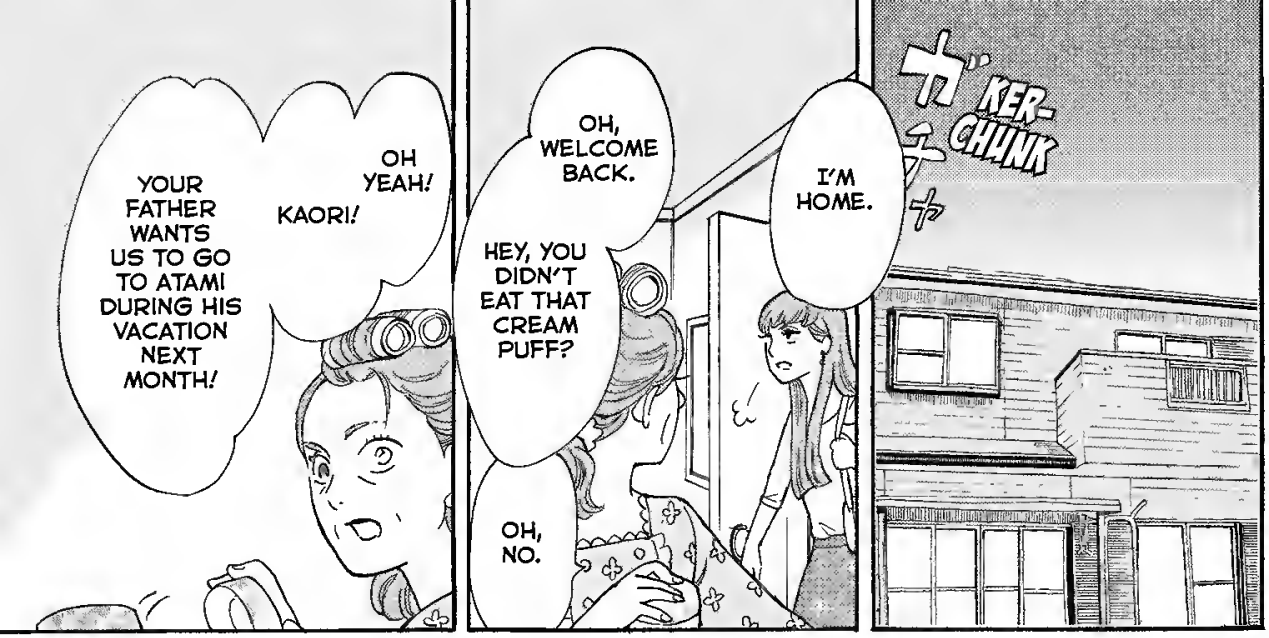
YES!! I APPRECI-ATE THE OPPORTU-NITY THEY HAVE GIVEN SUCH AN INEXPE-RIENCED WRITER!!
SOMEONE YOUR AGE REALLY WROTE THIS SERIES?
YOU'RE THE WRITER?
GOSH.
WHOOSH

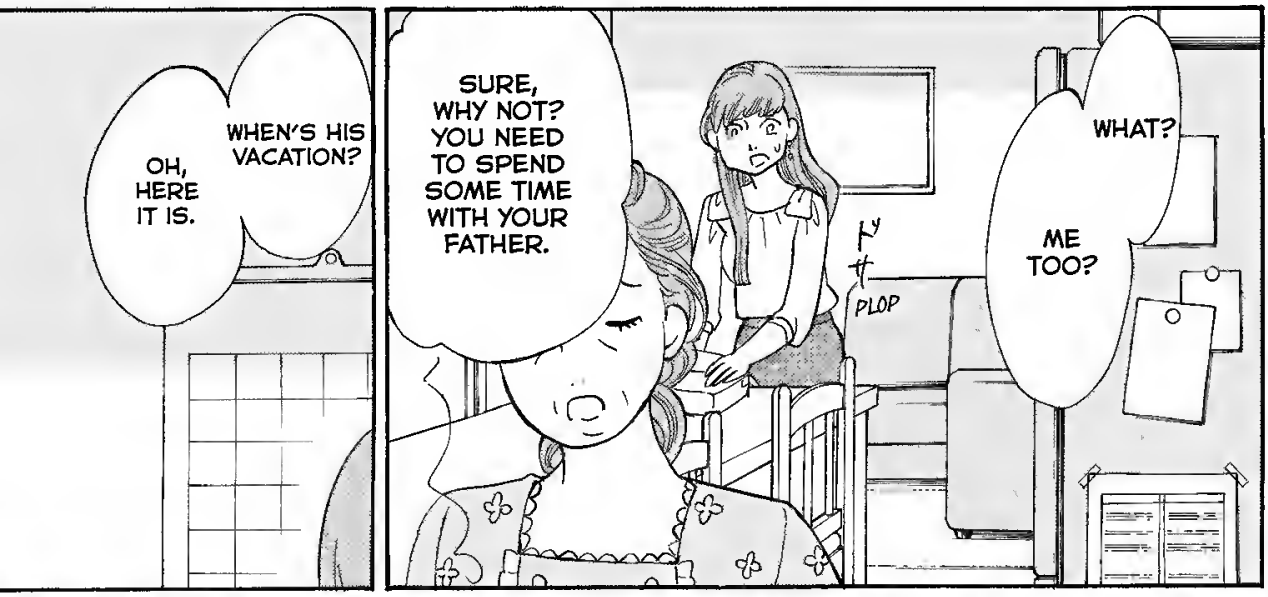
I'VE NEVER SEEN AN ACTOR LIKE HIM. I WANT TO SEE HIM IN LOTS OF OTHER ROLES.
MR. KEY IS REALLY INCREDIBLE.
MR. KEY'S ACTING ABILITIES AMPLIFIED MY SCRIPT MULTIPLE TIMES ON THIS SERIES, AND I'M VERY THANKFUL FOR THAT.
MY ENERGY IS MY ONE REDEEMING QUALITY!
FWAP
GOSH.
YES, SO DO I.
FUH-WHAPPP
I'LL DO ANY-THING!! I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AGAIN!!
NO, I'D LOVE IF WE COULD WORK TOGETHER AGAIN SOME DAY.
YOU'RE PRAISING ME TOO HIGH, MAMI.
AREN'T YOU HAPPY TO BE COMPLIMENTED THIS MUCH, KEY?
I HEARD *YOU* DROPPED HER.
...BUT A LOT HAP-PENED, AND SHE GOT DROPPED FROM THE PROJECT.
ACTUALLY, MAMI'S SEMPAI... WELL, TEACHER WAS SUPPOSED TO DO THE SCRIPT...

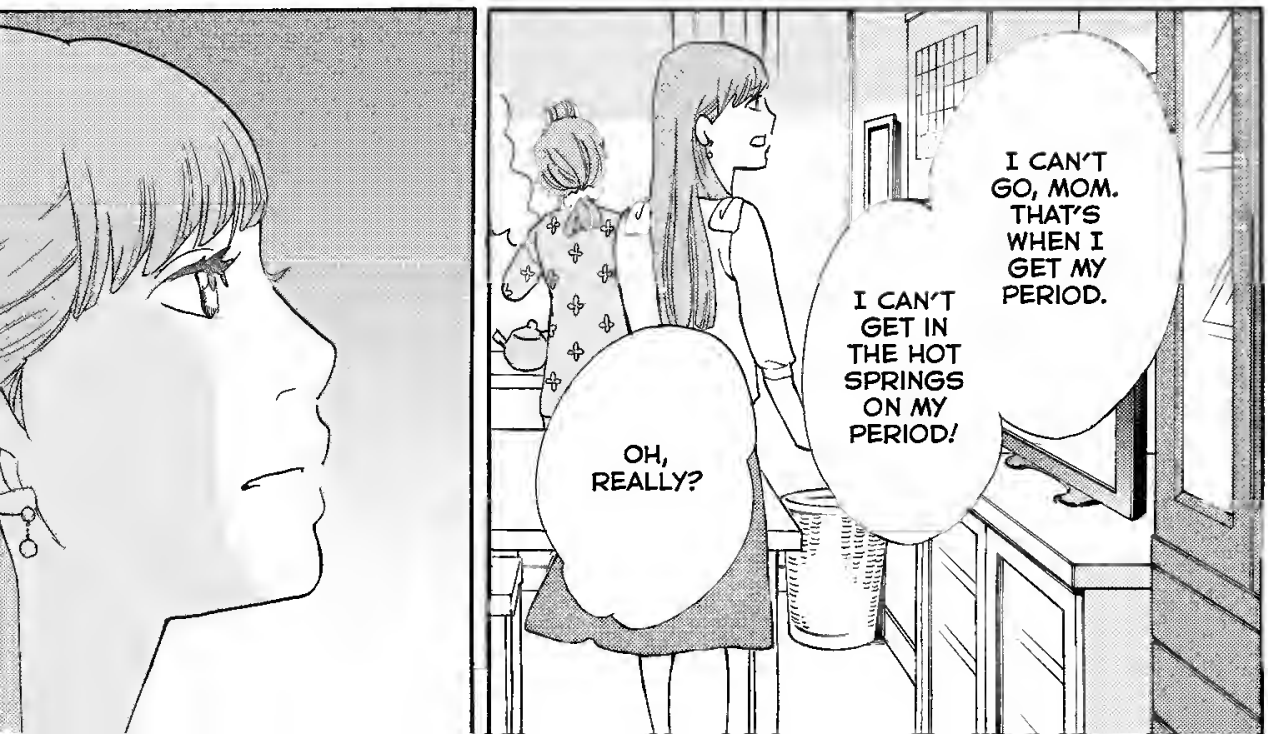
WOW.
HOW KIND OF HIM.
MR. HAYASAKA IS APPARENTLY GIVING HER JOBS HERE AND THERE.
THOSE TWO HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS.
SO I'VE HEARD.
BUT RINKO'S DOING ALL SORTS OF JOBS NOW. SHE'S FULFILLED. IT'S OKAY.
YEESH, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP BEING SO SELFISH.
YEAH, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT.


AND I'VE HEARD HE ASKED HER OUT A LONG TIME AGO AND SHE REJECTED HIM!

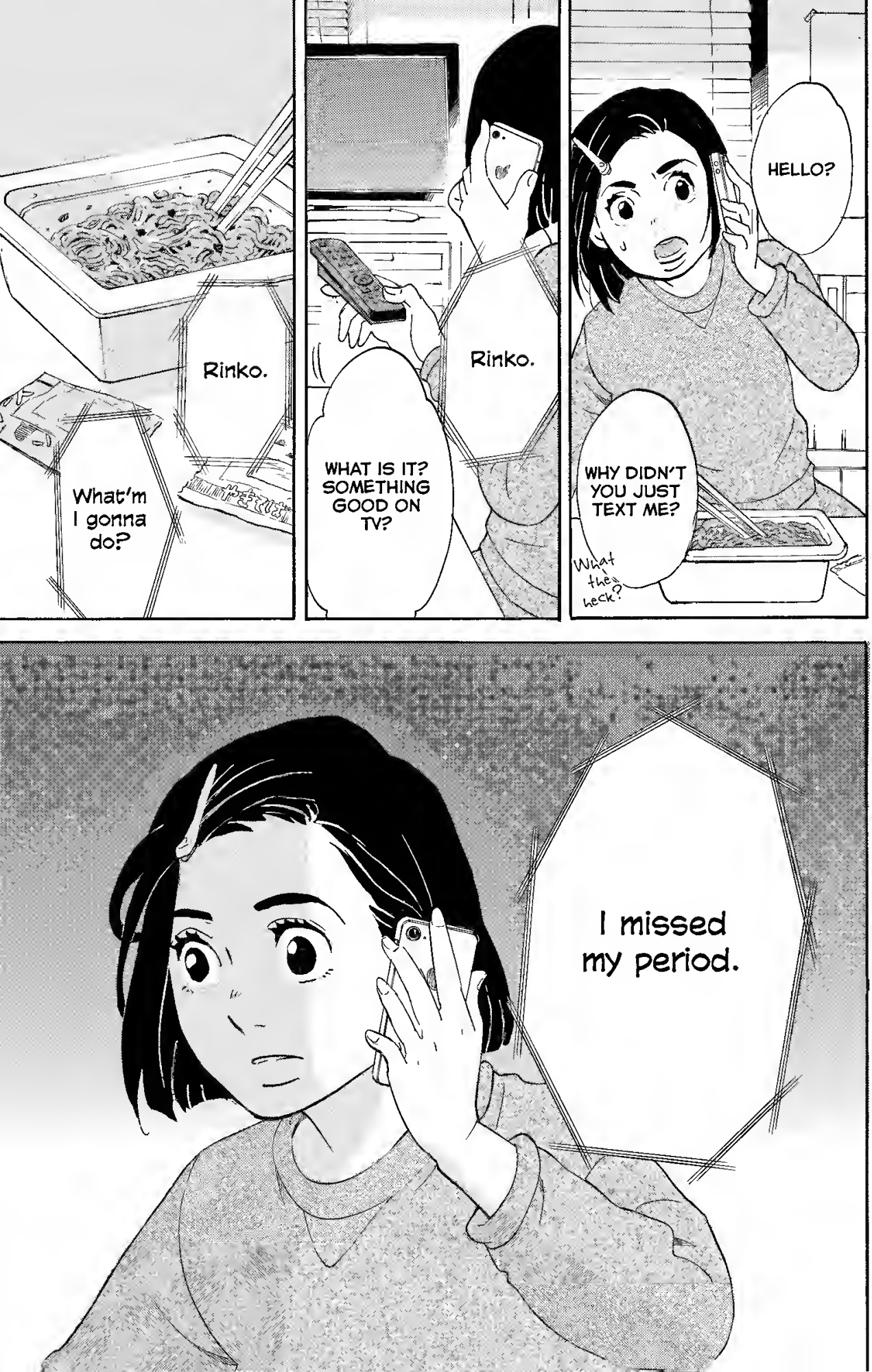
I'D BETTER GET GOING!
WELL!
...
HE TALKS ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME!
Aha ha!
REALLY.
WOW.


KER-CHUNK
I'M HOME.
OH, WELCOME BACK.
HEY, YOU DIDN'T EAT THAT CREAM PUFF?
OH, NO.
KAORI!
OH YEAH!
YOUR FATHER WANTS US TO GO TO ATAMI DURING HIS VACATION NEXT MONTH!


WHAT?
ME TOO?
PLOP
SURE, WHY NOT? YOU NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME WITH YOUR FATHER.
WHEN'S HIS VACATION?
OH, HERE IT IS.


I CAN'T GO, MOM. THAT'S WHEN I GET MY PERIOD.
I CAN'T GET IN THE HOT SPRINGS ON MY PERIOD!
OH, REALLY?

I'm making tea.
WHY NOT COME ANYWAY? YOU CAN USE THE BATH IN THE HOTEL ROOM.
...HUH?
HUH?!
KAORI?!
WHY DIDN'T SHE JUST TEXT ME?
A PHONE CALL?
HMM?
JING-A-LING-A-LING JING-A-LING-A-LING

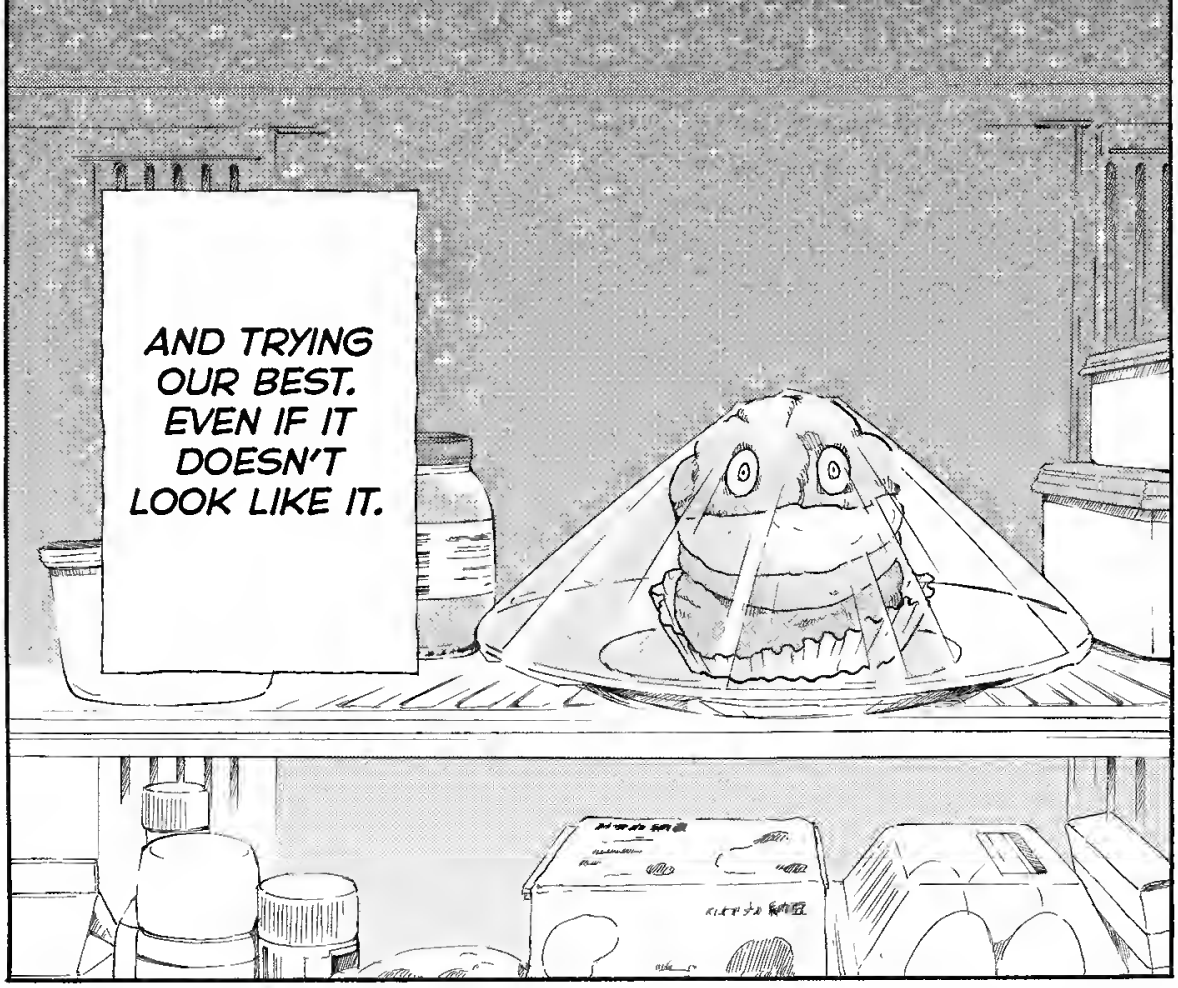

Rinko.
What'm I gonna do?
Rinko.
WHAT IS IT? SOMETHING GOOD ON TV?
HELLO?
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST TEXT ME?
What the heck?
I missed my period.

IT DIDN'T COME...
...LAST MONTH.
AND IT ALWAYS COMES ON THE 25TH.
BUT IT'S ALREADY THE 13TH.
IT'S OVER TWO WEEKS LATE.
2016 APR
...
!
DID HE USE PROTEC-TION?
M-
MUSICIANS DON'T USE PROTEC-TION...
WHAT ARE YOU, IDIOTS?!
WAIT...
INSIDE OR OUT-SIDE?

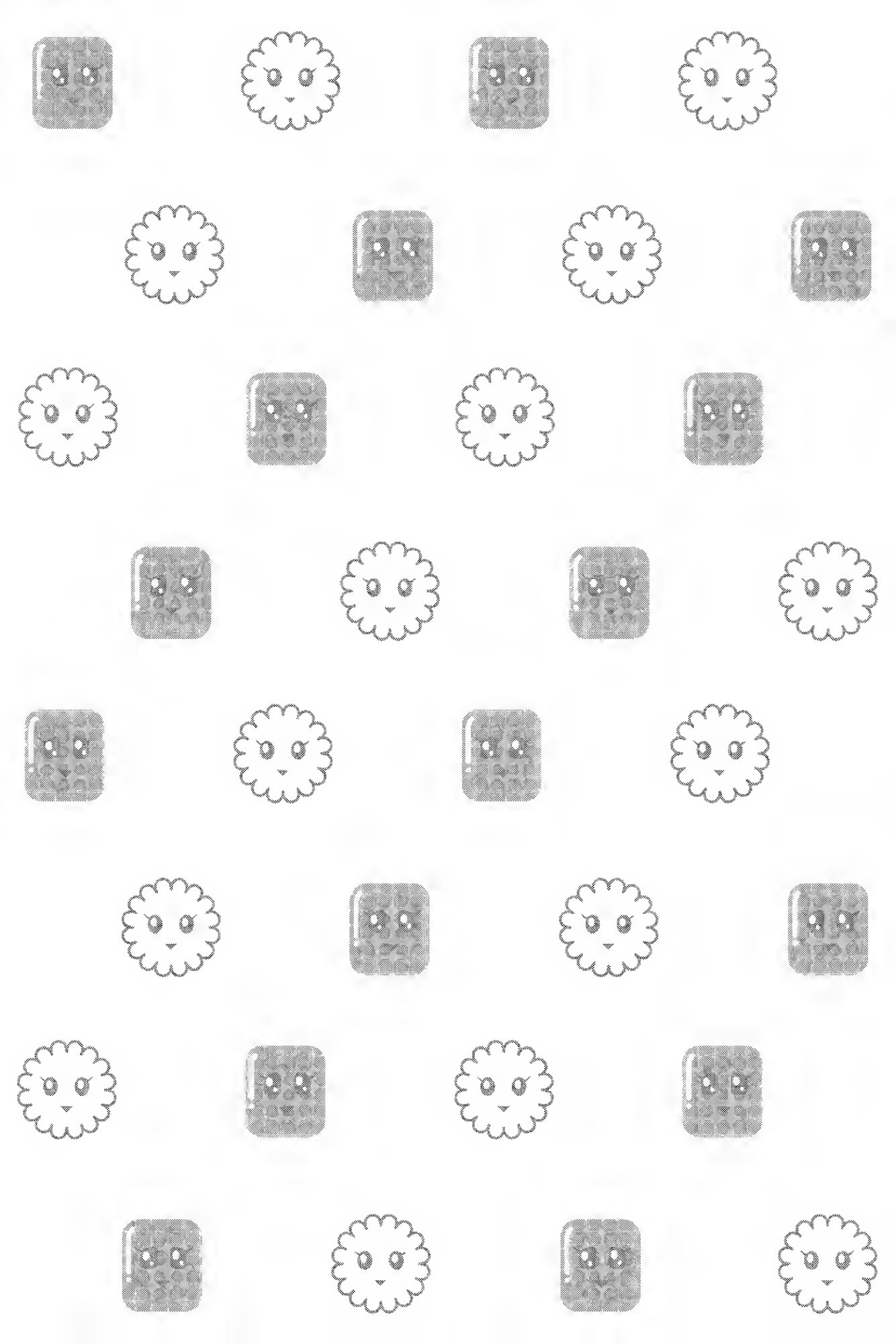
I'M INSIDE NOW.
IN MY ROOM.
No, not that outside.
Did he, you know, finish out-side?
HUH?
OH, YEAH. ALWAYS.
Wait, you're not on the pill?
I'M NOT.

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO, RINKO?
IT'S NOT LIKE WE AREN'T TRYING.

IN ORDER TO BECOME HAPPY...
WE'RE ENDURING MANY THINGS...

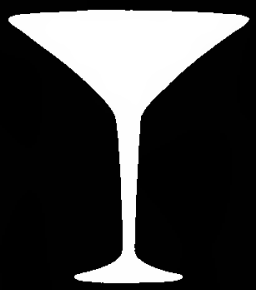

AND TRYING OUR BEST. EVEN IF IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT.

ALTHOUGH THINGS ARE LOOKING PRETTY DIFFERENT FROM THE ORDINARY PREDICTIONS WE MADE BACK THEN.

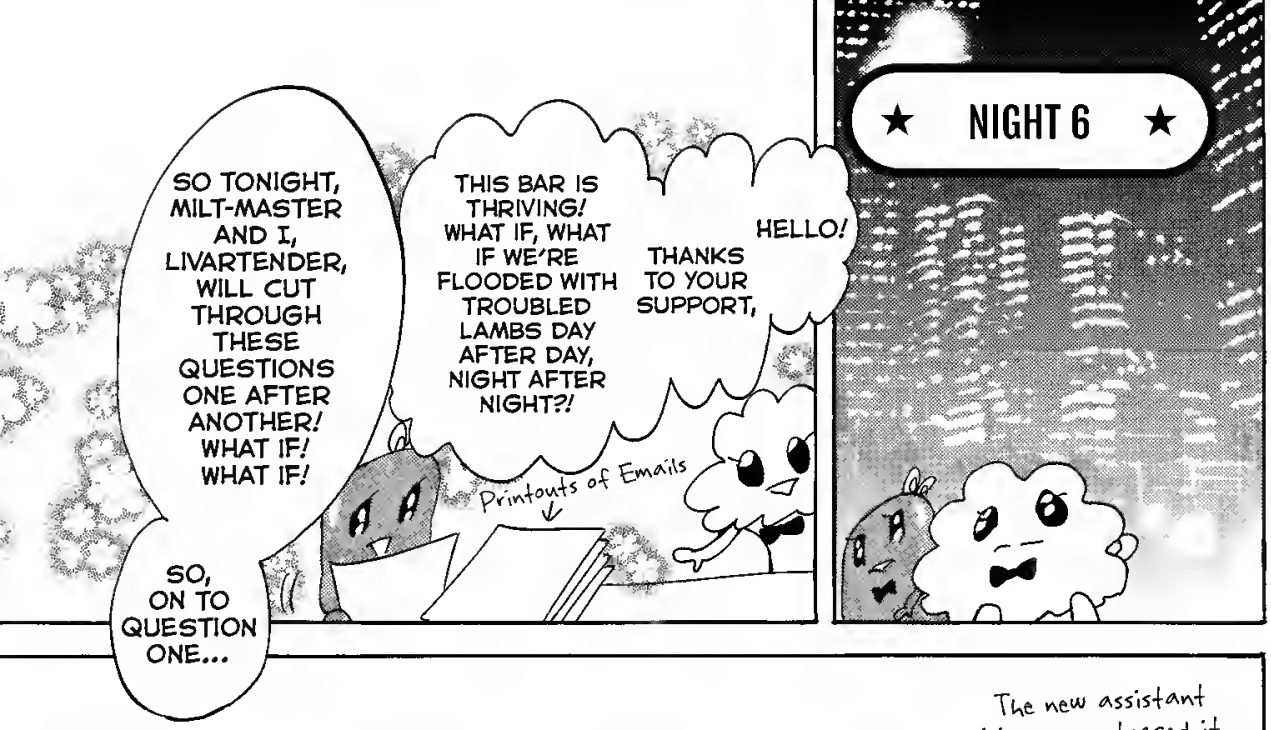


TOKYO TARAREBA GIRLS
(SIDE STORY)

Tarare-Bar

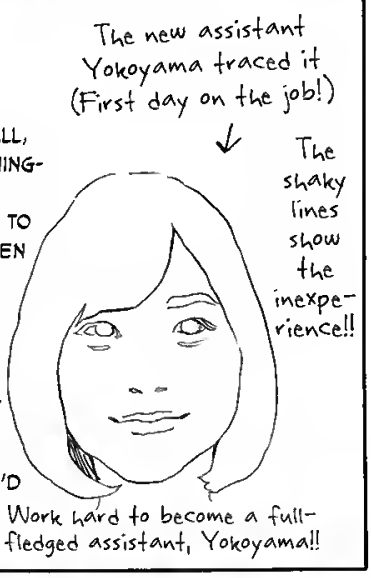


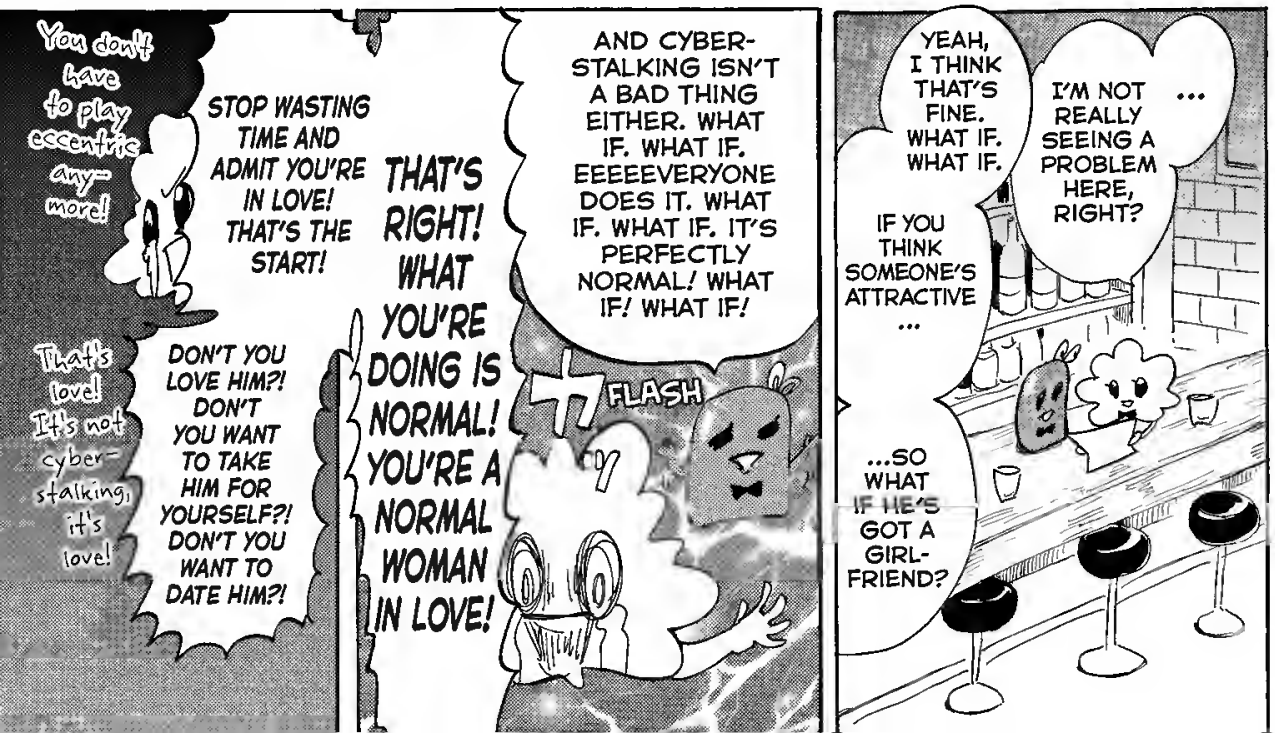
IN THE FOLLOWING SIDE STORY, "TARARE-BAR," WE PUBLISH PROBLEMS SUBMITTED BY READERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.


★ NIGHT 6 ★
HELLO!
THANKS TO YOUR SUPPORT,
THIS BAR IS THRIVING! WHAT IF, WHAT IF WE'RE FLOODED WITH TROUBLED LAMBS DAY AFTER DAY, NIGHT AFTER NIGHT?!
Printouts of Emails
SO TONIGHT, MILT-MASTER AND I, LIVARTENDER, WILL CUT THROUGH THESE QUESTIONS ONE AFTER ANOTHER! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
SO, ON TO QUESTION ONE...

PROBLEM: I DON'T KNOW HOW TO APPROACH THE PERSON I'M INTERESTED IN

THERE'S A MAN AT WORK I FIND VERY ATTRACTIVE. WE DON'T INTERACT AT WORK AT ALL, ONLY PASSING EACH OTHER IN THE HALLS AT MOST (I WANDER AROUND HIS DESK MEANINGLESSLY TIME AND TIME AGAIN). NATURALLY, I'VE NEVER SPOKEN TO HIM EITHER.
I LOOKED UP HIS NAME IN THE COMPANY REGISTER AND EMPLOYED MY SEARCH SKILLS TO FIND HIS INSTAGRAM PAGE, BUT NOW I DON'T KNOW HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN US. PLUS, ON INSTAGRAM, HE DELVES INTO FASHION CRITICISM, REFERENCES GOING TO BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE, AND UPLOADS PHOTOS OF HIS GIRLFRIEND WHO WOULD LOOK GREAT IN COMME DES GARÇONS. HE'S SO AWARE. HE'S SO MUCH TRENDIER THAN ME, AND HIS GIRLFRIEND IS SO CUTE, THAT WHEN I WATCH HIM EVERY DAY ON INSTAGRAM, I FEEL LIKE I COULD BE HAPPY JUST STAYING A FAN CYBERSTALKING HIM FROM AFAR... BUT AT WORK, I GO OUT OF MY WAY TO WANDER AROUND IN HIS VICINITY, MY HEART AFLUTTER. I'VE LOST SIGHT OF WHAT I WANT TO BE TO HIM. I MEAN, HE IS PHYSICALLY JUST MY TYPE, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOT THIS LONG-TERM GIRLFRIEND, SO I THINK I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEX WITH HIM JUST ONCE. PN: KANO-P (23)


The new assistant Yokoyama traced it (First day on the job!)
The shaky lines show the inexperience!!
Work hard to become a full-fledged assistant, Yokoyama!!


You don't have to play eccentric anymore!
That's love! It's not cyber-stalking, it's love!
STOP WASTING TIME AND ADMIT YOU'RE IN LOVE! THAT'S THE START!
DON'T YOU LOVE HIM?! DON'T YOU WANT TO TAKE HIM FOR YOURSELF?! DON'T YOU WANT TO DATE HIM?!
THAT'S RIGHT! WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS NORMAL! YOU'RE A NORMAL WOMAN IN LOVE!
AND CYBER-STALKING ISN'T A BAD THING EITHER. WHAT IF. WHAT IF. EEEEEVERYONE DOES IT. WHAT IF. WHAT IF. IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
FLASH
YEAH, I THINK THAT'S FINE. WHAT IF. WHAT IF.
I'M NOT REALLY SEEING A PROBLEM HERE, RIGHT?
...
IF YOU THINK SOMEONE'S ATTRACTIVE ...
...SO WHAT IF HE'S GOT A GIRL-FRIEND?

THE MASTER IS SAYING WHAT YOU TALK TO HIM ABOUT CAN BE SOMETHING COMPLETELY MEANINGLESS LIKE THAT. YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?

JUST GO UP TO HIM AND SAY... "MR. XXXX, ABOUT THE SALTED RICE MALT PROJECT..."

Our course on starting love.

OKAY!

AHEM! FIRST, TALK TO THE GUY!

AHEM, NOW WE WILL REVEAL WHAT KANO-P SHOULD ACTUALLY DO.

UNTIL YOU ACTUALLY SPEAK TO HIM, YOU'RE JUST GOING TO GET WORSE AND WORSE.

Today's What-If Aphorism:

THEN SKEDADDLE OUT OF THERE.

YOU SAY, "OH, I'M SORRY. YOU'RE NOT MR. XXXX? MY MISTAKE."

AND THEN WHEN HE GOES "HUH?"

THAT'S ALL!!

YEAH, I GUESS PUKING DOESN'T REALLY MAKE YOU POPULAR ...

YEAH, BUT IT SAYS SHE PUKES ...

SOUNDS LIKE SHE'D BE PRETTY POPULAR.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH A HARD-DRINKING WOMAN?

...OR DOES IT?

BUT LOOK. SHE SAYS SHE INSULTS THE GUY SHE'S WITH. WHAT IF. WHAT IF.

I THINK EVEN IF THEY'RE NASTY DRUNKS WHO SLEEP AND PUKE, POPULAR GIRLS ARE STILL POPULAR...

OH...

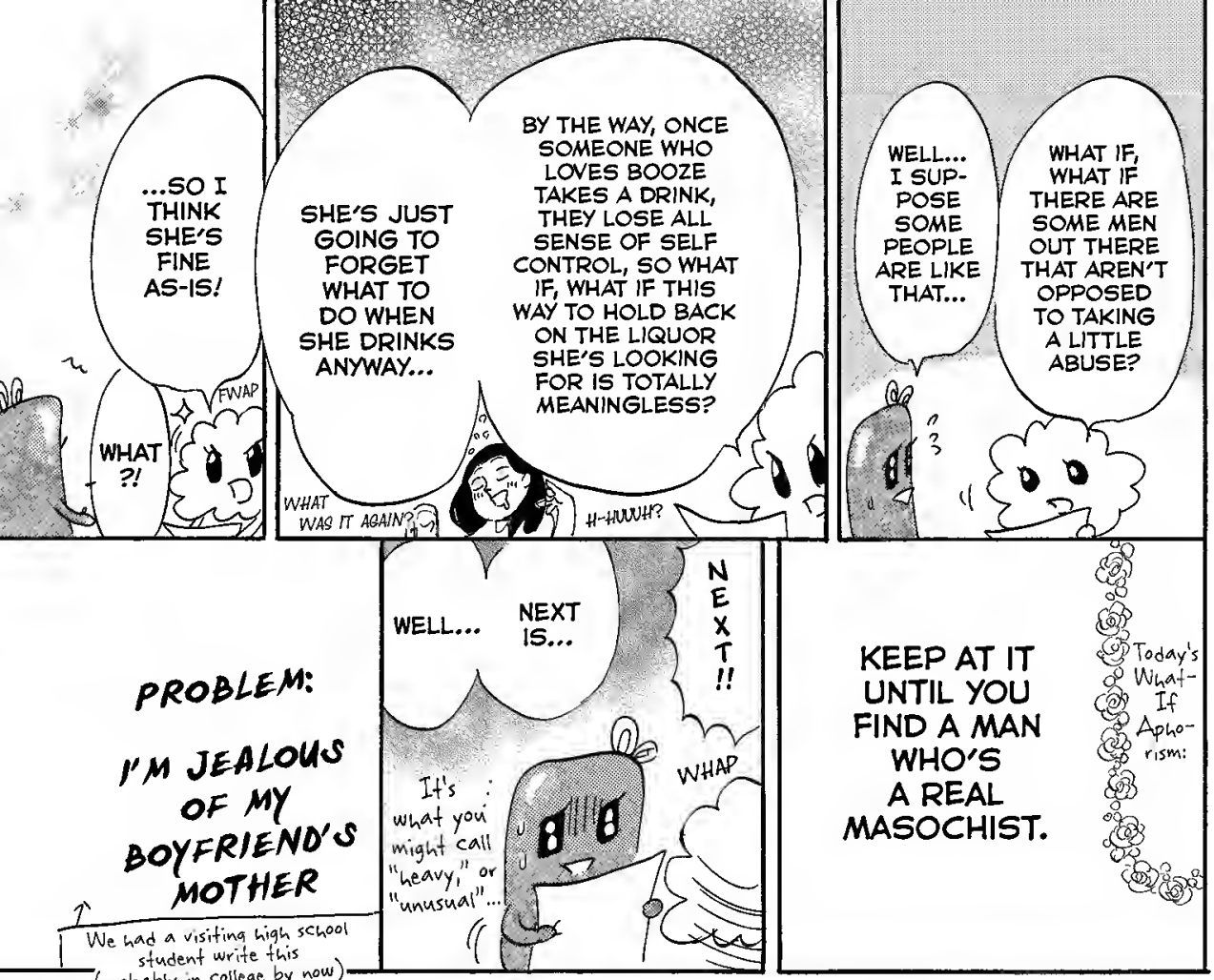
NEXT!!

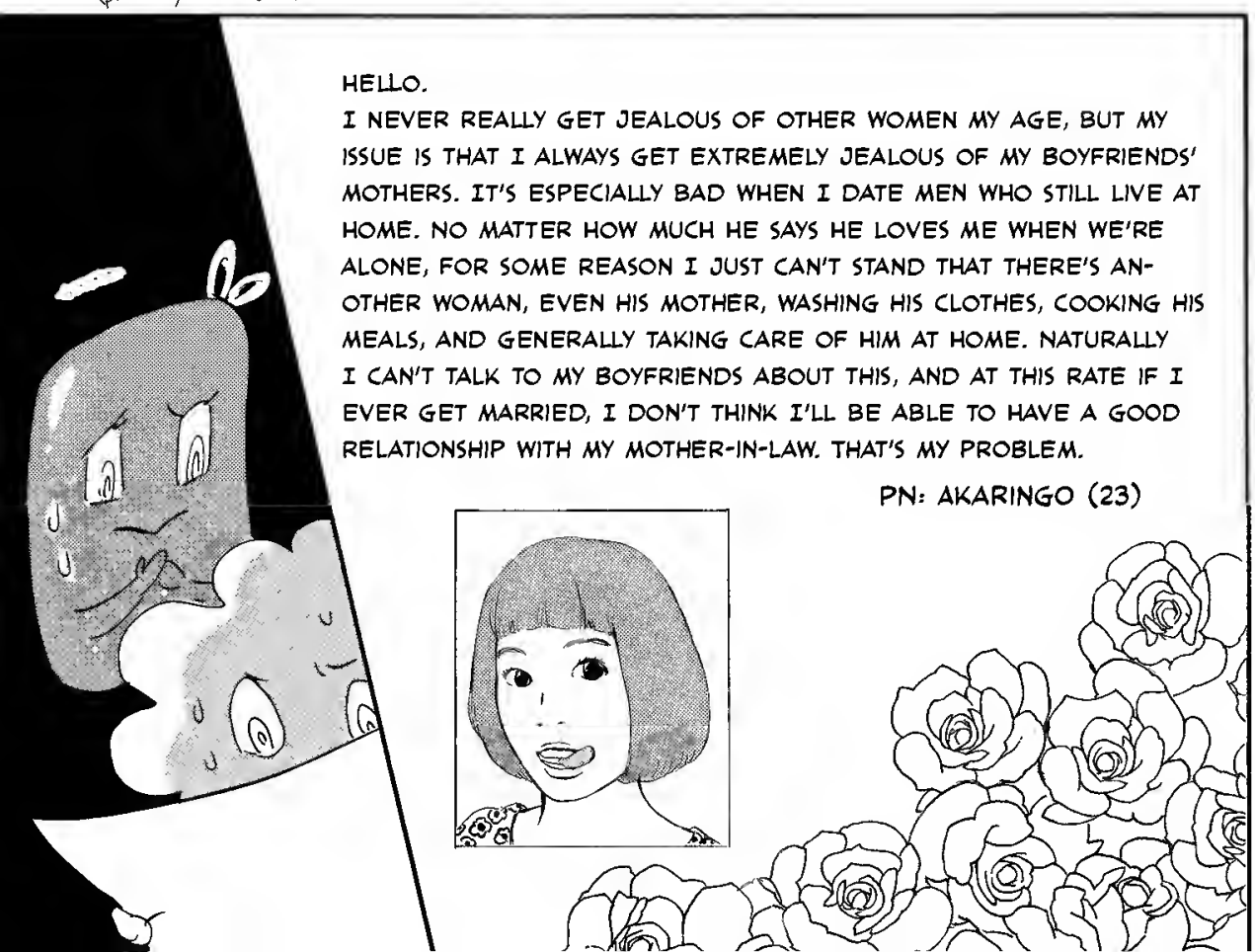
PROBLEM:
WHEN I GO DRINKING ALONE WITH A MAN, I GET CARRIED AWAY

I'M A ROWDY DRUNK AND IT OFTEN CAUSES TROUBLE WITH MEN.
I CAN HOLD MY LIQUOR PRETTY WELL, SO I OFTEN GET CARRIED AWAY WHEN MEN START CHEERING ME ON ABOUT HOW I'M A "GOOD DRINKER" AND I'LL START ORDERING AWAMORI AND TEQUILA AND STUFF. IF I JUST GOT TIPSY AND WENT HOME WITH THESE MEN AT THAT POINT, IT'D BE FINE, BUT I PASS OUT AND PUKE OR START INSULTING THEM... APPARENTLY. NATURALLY, I DON'T REMEMBER ANY OF THIS. WHEN I GO OUT DRINKING NORMALLY, I BEHAVE AS ANY RESPECTABLE CITIZEN WOULD, BUT WHEN I GO OUT ALONE WITH MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITE SEX, I SEEM TO GET CARRIED AWAY.
I WANT TO KNOW A WAY I CAN HOLD BACK ON THE LIQUOR IN THAT SITUATION.

PN: PYONHARU (24)

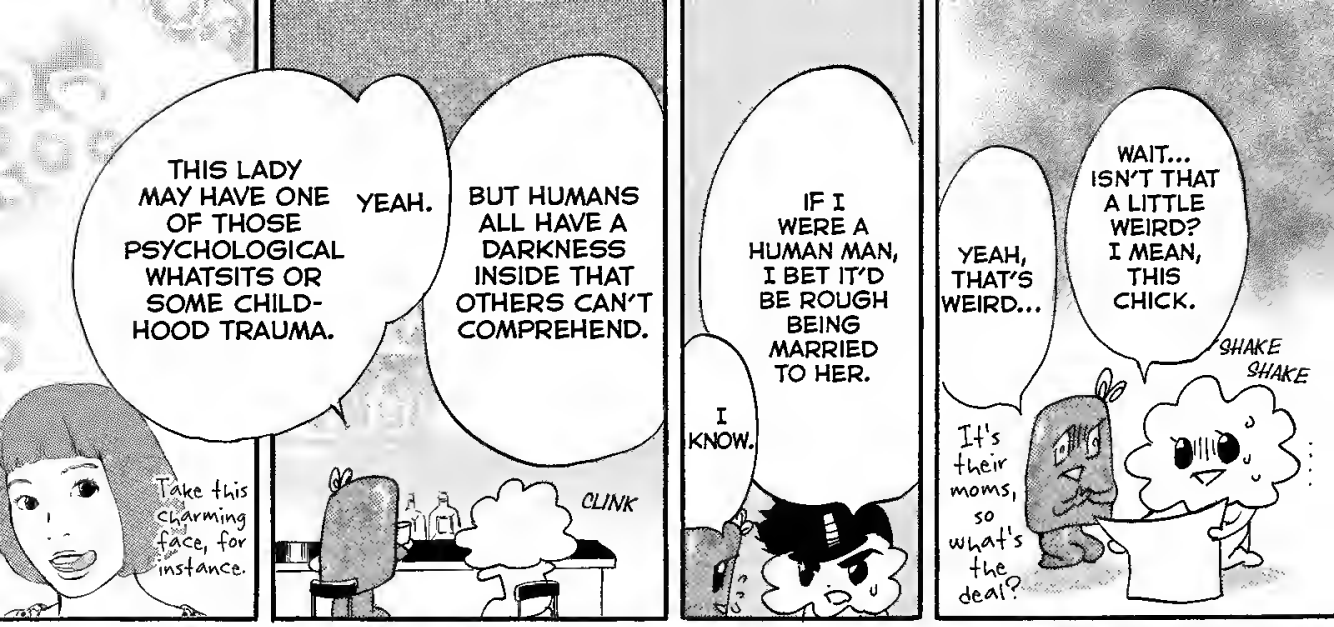
Yeah, our veteran Itou's lines are much more confident!


...SO I THINK SHE'S FINE AS-IS!
WHAT?!
FWAP
SHE'S JUST GOING TO FORGET WHAT TO DO WHEN SHE DRINKS ANYWAY...
BY THE WAY, ONCE SOMEONE WHO LOVES BOOZE TAKES A DRINK, THEY LOSE ALL SENSE OF SELF CONTROL, SO WHAT IF, WHAT IF THIS WAY TO HOLD BACK ON THE LIQUOR SHE'S LOOKING FOR IS TOTALLY MEANINGLESS?
WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?
H-HUUUH?
WELL... I SUP-POSE SOME PEOPLE ARE LIKE THAT...
WHAT IF, WHAT IF THERE ARE SOME MEN OUT THERE THAT AREN'T OPPOSED TO TAKING A LITTLE ABUSE?
PROBLEM:
I'M JEALOUS OF MY BOYFRIEND'S MOTHER
We had a visiting high school student write this (probably in college by now)
WELL... NEXT IS...
NEXT!!
It's what you might call "heavy," or "unusual"...
WHAP
KEEP AT IT UNTIL YOU FIND A MAN WHO'S A REAL MASOCHIST.
Today's What-If Apho-rism:



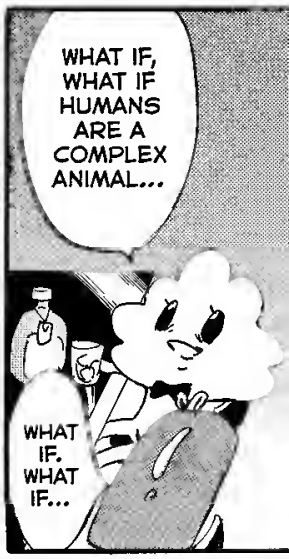
HELLO.
I NEVER REALLY GET JEALOUS OF OTHER WOMEN MY AGE, BUT MY ISSUE IS THAT I ALWAYS GET EXTREMELY JEALOUS OF MY BOYFRIENDS' MOTHERS. IT'S ESPECIALLY BAD WHEN I DATE MEN WHO STILL LIVE AT HOME. NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE SAYS HE LOVES ME WHEN WE'RE ALONE, FOR SOME REASON I JUST CAN'T STAND THAT THERE'S ANOTHER WOMAN, EVEN HIS MOTHER, WASHING HIS CLOTHES, COOKING HIS MEALS, AND GENERALLY TAKING CARE OF HIM AT HOME. NATURALLY I CAN'T TALK TO MY BOYFRIENDS ABOUT THIS, AND AT THIS RATE IF I EVER GET MARRIED, I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MOTHER-IN-LAW. THAT'S MY PROBLEM.

PN: AKARINGO (23)


THIS LADY MAY HAVE ONE OF THOSE PSYCHOLOGICAL WHATSITS OR SOME CHILD-HOOD TRAUMA.
YEAH.
BUT HUMANS ALL HAVE A DARKNESS INSIDE THAT OTHERS CAN'T COMPREHEND.
Take this charming face, for instance.
CLINK
IF I WERE A HUMAN MAN, I BET IT'D BE ROUGH BEING MARRIED TO HER.
I KNOW.
YEAH, THAT'S WEIRD...
WAIT... ISN'T THAT A LITTLE WEIRD? I MEAN, THIS CHICK.
SHAKE SHAKE
It's their moms, so what's the deal?

ADMIT THERE'S "A MONSTER INSIDE ME I CAN'T CONTROL" AND IF YOU STILL WANT TO GET MARRIED, YOU'LL PROBABLY JUST HAVE TO PICK A MAN WHO LIVES FAR AWAY (LIKE IN OKINAWA OR HOKKAIDO) FROM HIS MOTHER?

Today's What-If Apho-rism:



Today's What-If Apho-rism:

JUST SAY "WE ALWAYS GO TO SAIZ_RIYA, SO WHY DON'T WE GO SOME-WHERE ELSE ON OCCASION?" YOU IDIOT.

And if he gets mad about that, dump his sorry butt!!

Your second question was so lame, Pyonharu!

PROBLEM: MY BOYFRIEND ONLY TAKES ME TO NON-FANCY PLACES

I'VE FOUND A NICE MAN LATELY, BUT HE LOVES SAIZ_RIYA (AND WE'RE BOTH GROWN ADULTS). IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE SAIZ_RIYA, BUT I DON'T REALLY CONSIDER IT A PLACE TO GO ON A DATE. BUT IF I TOLD HIM THAT, HE MIGHT THINK I'M ONE OF THOSE WOMEN WHO ONLY LIKES GOING TO EXPENSIVE RESTAURANTS, SO I SAY THINGS LIKE "WOW, THE FOOD'S SO GOOD, BUT IT'S SO AFFORDABLE!! I LOVE MILAN-STYLE DORIA*!" AND HE BELIEVES ME. BUT I GET THE FEELING IF I KEEP GOING OUT WITH HIM, WE'LL JUST KEEP GOING TO SAIZ_RIYA EVERY TIME. I CAN'T EVEN TALK TO MY GIRLFRIENDS ABOUT THIS. TELL ME HOW I CAN SHOW OFF THAT I'M NOT AN "EXPENSIVE" WOMAN AND AVOID GOING TO SAIZ_RIYA.

PN: PYONHARU (24)

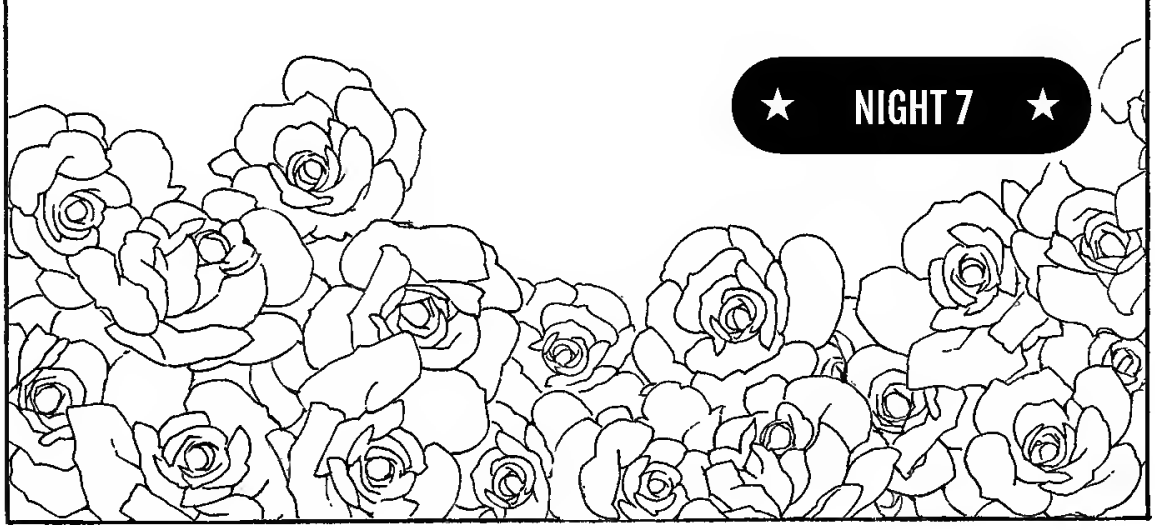
NICE!!

I LOVE ONES LIKE THIS!!

WHAT AN EASY QUES-TION!!

WHOA!! A SECOND QUESTION FROM PYONHARU!!

*Doria is a dish of rice pilaf topped with a Béchamel sauce.



LATELY, THERE'S A MAN I'VE BEEN INTERESTED IN.
BUT THE REASON I'M INTERESTED IN HIM IS BECAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE HE MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN ME?
LIKE, AT MY BIRTHDAY GET-TOGETHER WITH ALL MY FRIENDS, HE GAVE ME A REAL PRESENT AND ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT I HAD A GUY I LIKED.
WE WERE FRIENDS BACK IN SCHOOL, BUT WHILE WE'D GO OUT IN GROUPS TOGETHER, WE'D ONLY REALLY HANG OUT ALONE IF WE WERE WORKING NEAR EACH OTHER AND DECIDED TO GRAB A BITE TO EAT. HE DOESN'T ACTIVELY INVITE ME OUT.
WHAT THE HECK DOES THIS GUY THINK OF ME?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW MEN THINK.

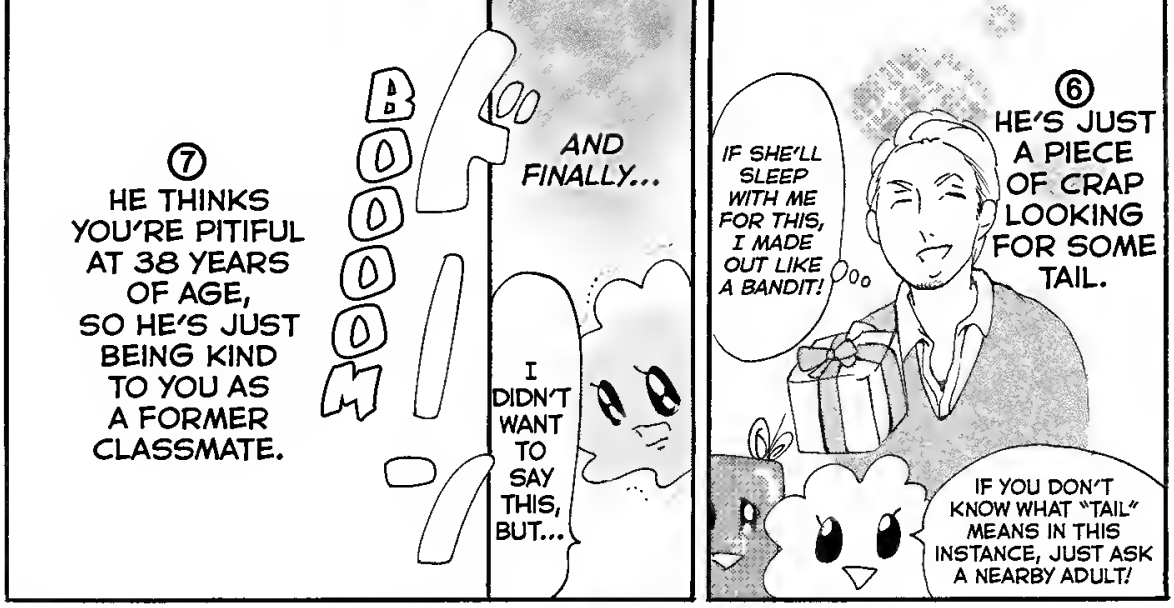
PN: MORI-MORI (38)

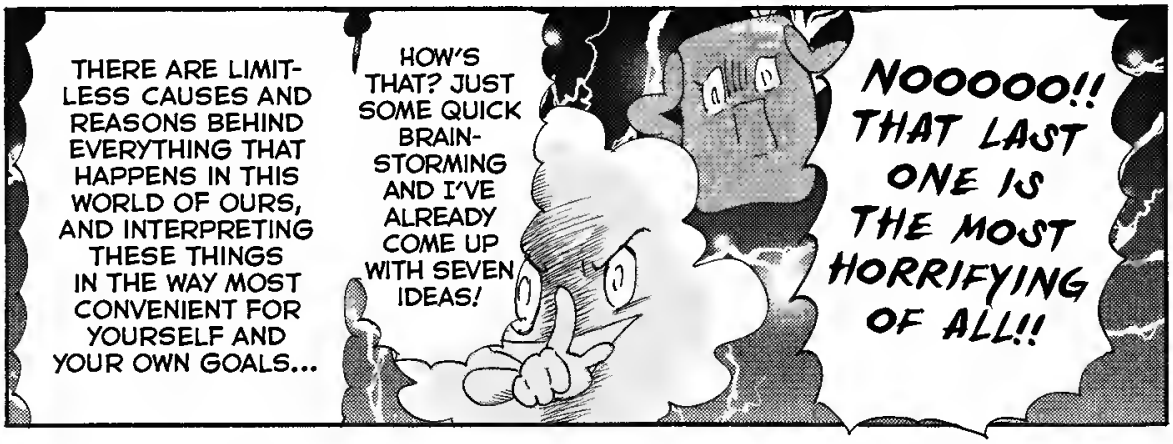
AHEM, TODAY'S FIRST QUESTION COMES FROM MORI-MORI IN TOKYO. (38)
ALL RIGHT! HERE COME THE QUESTIONS !!
With no leadup!!))
HIGASHIMURA PRO MEMO
This episode of Tarare-Bar was begun suddenly at 4PM on the day of Tarareba and Princess Jellyfish's monthly deadline.
(The deadline's at 7!) say the assistants.

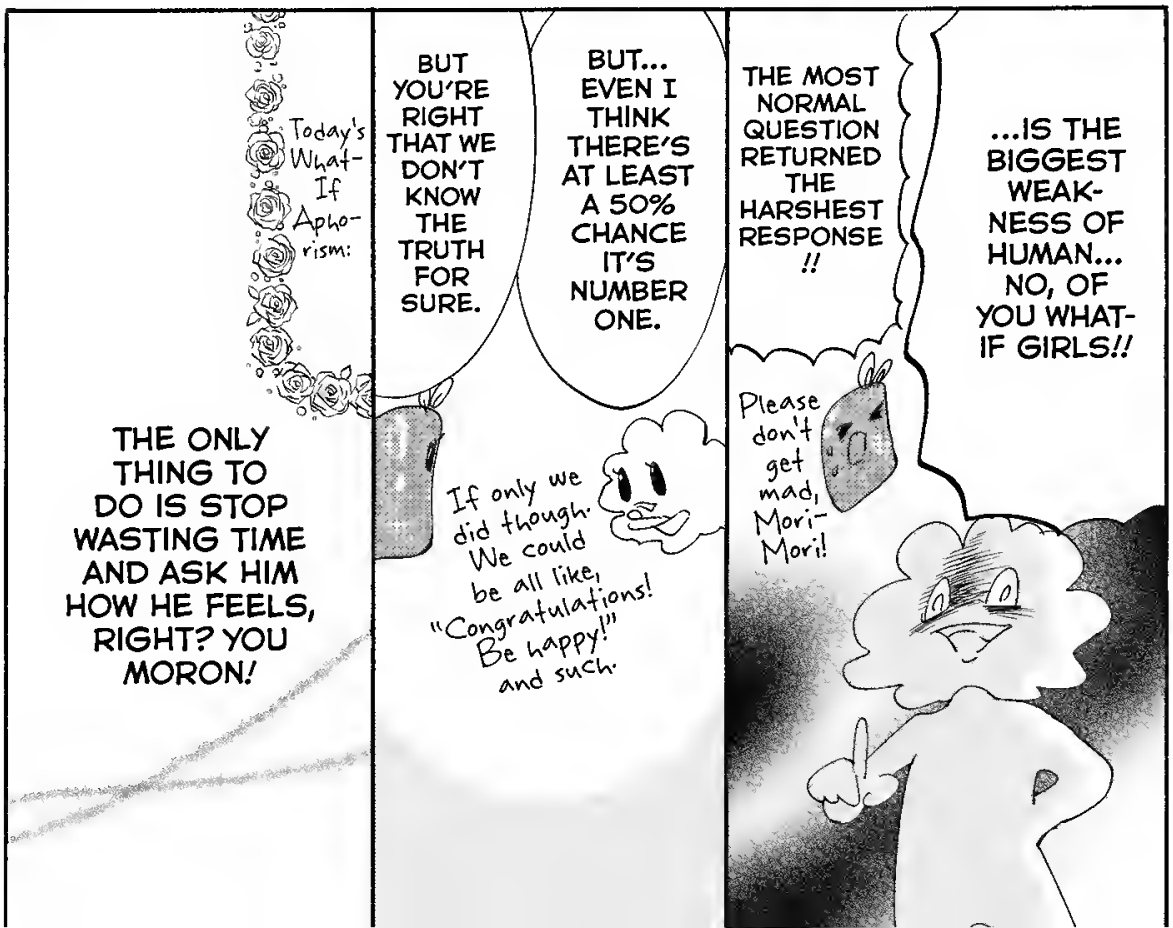
THE FIRST TIME A NORMAL LOST LAMB CAME TO THIS BAR
WHUMP
A NORMAL QUES-TION! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!!
WHAT IF, WHAT IF WE GOT A NORMAL QUES-TION?!
T-
THIS IS!!

OUR QUESTIONS THUS FAR
*CAN I KEEP GOING IF I MARRY SOMEONE I DON'T LOVE?
*I DON'T THINK I CAN LIVE WITH ANOTHER PERSON
*I CAN'T STOP FOLLOWING BANDS ON TOUR
*WHEN I DRINK ALONE WITH MEN, I INSULT THEM
*I'M JEALOUS OF MY BOYFRIENDS' MOMS
SO THE ISSUE IS WHILE THIS GUY INVITES HER TO MEALS AND GIVES HER PRESENTS, SHE CAN'T TELL WHAT THIS LESS-THAN-AGGRESSIVE GUY THINKS OF HER...
AHEM. LET'S SEE...
YEAH! I GET IT!
GIVE A QUICK, CLEAR ANSWER TO THIS NORMAL QUESTION!
HERE, TARARE-BAR MASTER !!
IT'S OUR FIRST NORMAL LOVE QUESTION!! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
WOW!! THIS ONE'S ON A TOTALLY DIFFERENT LEVEL THAN OUR PAST QUESTIONS!!
WAIT!! I DON'T KNOW EITHER!!
WHAP
BOOM
FLASH
ONLY HIM AND HIS GUARD-IAN SPIRITS KNOW HOW HE FEELS!!
AND EVEN IF WE INTERRO-GATE HIM, WHO KNOWS IF HE'LL TELL US THE TRUTH?!
UNLESS WE DRAG HIM HERE AND INTER-ROGATE HIM OUR-SELVES, I'LL NEVER KNOW!!
We've known each other for years, but I've never seen that face before... What if... What if...
M-MASTER ...
I DON'T !!
KNOW !!

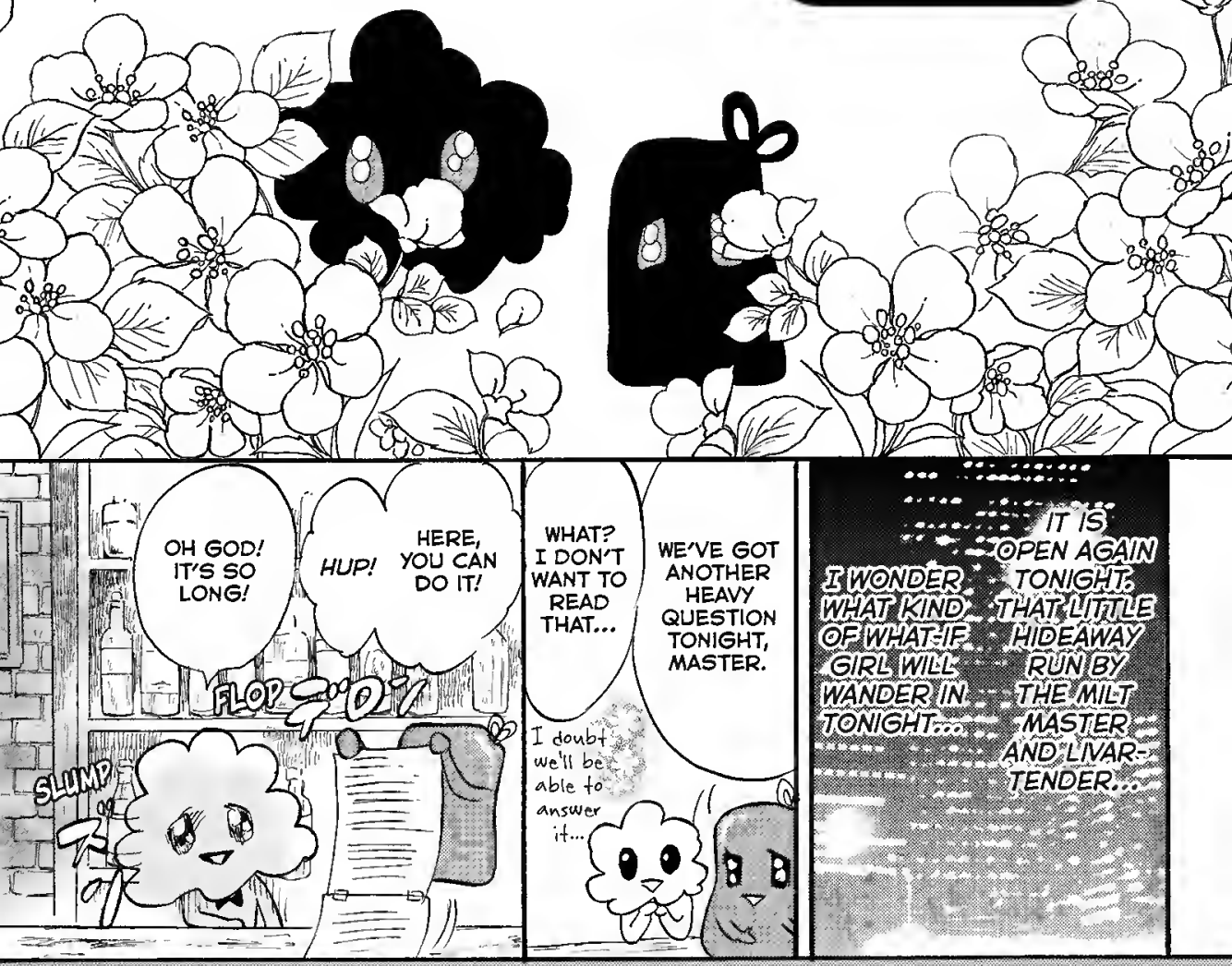
THAT DOES SEEM THE MOST LIKELY PREDICTION. WHAT IF. WHAT IF.
YES.
EEK!
EEK!
OH, DOES IT?
① HE LIKES YOU (MORIMORI), BUT DOESN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO ASK YOU OUT, SO HE'S TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION / TESTING TO SEE WHETHER HE HAS A SHOT BY GIVING YOU PRESENTS AND INVITING YOU OUT FOR MEALS.
OKAY, FINE! I'LL MAKE A PREDICTION!
AT LEAST TRY TO MAKE A PREDICTION... WHAT IF... WHAT IF...
I-IF... IF YOU TALK LIKE THAT, THERE'S NO REASON FOR THIS BAR TO EVEN EXIST...
AHHH! THAT SEEMS PRETTY LIKELY!
Man, I'm hungry. Who do I have in the area?
EEEK!
WHAT IF, WHAT IF HE'S ONE OF THOSE MEN THAT LIKES TO HAVE "FRIENDLY" WOMEN HE CAN CALL UP AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE IN DIFFERENT TOWNS?
③ HE'S A WOMANIZER WHO JUST LIKES TO HAVE A LOT OF WOMEN ALL OVER THE PLACE THAT ARE ALMOST GIRLFRIENDS.
HUUH ?!
ONE OF THOSE GIRLY MEN?!
THERE ARE MEN LIKE THAT, AREN'T THERE ?!
② HE'S ACTUALLY KIND OF A FEMININE GUY WHO JUST LIKES GIVING HIS LADY FRIENDS PRESENTS ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS AND GOING OUT TO LUNCH WITH THEM.
IF I GIVE HER A PRESENT, MAYBE SHE'LL GIVE ME ONE ON MY BIRTHDAY.
For you.
⑤ HE'S JUST AN IDIOT THAT'S GIVEN IT NO THOUGHT WHATSOEVER.
BUT IT'S TOTALLY POSSIBLE.
NO!! ANYTHING BUT THIS ONE!!
THIS IS TURNING INTO A MOVIE PLOT!!
BUT NO ONE CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN IT'S NOT THE CASE!
DON'T TRY TO PRETEND YOU'VE FORGOTTEN.
BACK IN SCHOOL, YOU SAID THE WAY I LAUGH WAS CREEPY.
④ HE'S ACTUALLY A NUTJOB WHO HOLDS A GRUDGE ABOUT SOMETHING YOU SAID BACK IN YOUR SCHOOL DAYS (THAT YOU'VE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN), AND HE'S WAITING FOR THE PERFECT MOMENT TO EXACT HIS REVENGE.


⑦
HE THINKS YOU'RE PITIFUL AT 38 YEARS OF AGE, SO HE'S JUST BEING KIND TO YOU AS A FORMER CLASSMATE.
BOOOOM!
AND FINALLY...
I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY THIS, BUT...
⑥
HE'S JUST A PIECE OF CRAP LOOKING FOR SOME TAIL.
IF SHE'LL SLEEP WITH ME FOR THIS, I MADE OUT LIKE A BANDIT!
IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT "TAIL" MEANS IN THIS INSTANCE, JUST ASK A NEARBY ADULT!


THERE ARE LIMITLESS CAUSES AND REASONS BEHIND EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THIS WORLD OF OURS, AND INTERPRETING THESE THINGS IN THE WAY MOST CONVENIENT FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR OWN GOALS...
HOW'S THAT? JUST SOME QUICK BRAINSTORMING AND I'VE ALREADY COME UP WITH SEVEN IDEAS!
NOOOOO!! THAT LAST ONE IS THE MOST HORRIFYING OF ALL!!


Today's What-If Aphorism:
THE ONLY THING TO DO IS STOP WASTING TIME AND ASK HIM HOW HE FEELS, RIGHT? YOU MORON!
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT THAT WE DON'T KNOW THE TRUTH FOR SURE.
BUT... EVEN I THINK THERE'S AT LEAST A 50% CHANCE IT'S NUMBER ONE.
If only we did though. We could be all like, "Congratulations! Be happy!" and such.
THE MOST NORMAL QUESTION RETURNED THE HARSHEST RESPONSE !!
Please don't get mad, Mori-Mori!
...IS THE BIGGEST WEAKNESS OF HUMAN... NO, OF YOU WHAT-IF GIRLS!!

★ NIGHT 8 ★

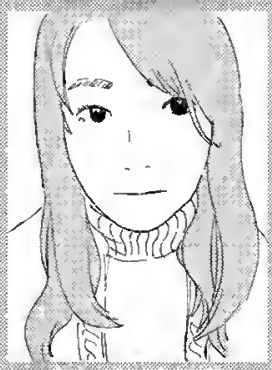

OH GOD! IT'S SO LONG!
HUP!
HERE, YOU CAN DO IT!
FLOP
SLUMP
WHAT? I DON'T WANT TO READ THAT...
WE'VE GOT ANOTHER HEAVY QUESTION TONIGHT, MASTER.
I doubt we'll be able to answer it...
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF WHAT-IF GIRL WILL WANDER IN TONIGHT...
IT IS OPEN AGAIN TONIGHT. THAT LITTLE HIDEAWAY RUN BY THE MILT MASTER AND LIVAR-TENDER...

PROBLEM: I CAN NEVER HAVE A RELATIONSHIP THAT ISN'T PURELY PHYSICAL...

I AM 32. I'VE NEVER HAD A REAL "BOYFRIEND." IN MY 20S I HAD NO SELF CONFIDENCE, AND I GOT TO THINKING THAT I'D RATHER SPEND ONE NIGHT WITH THE BOY I LIKED THAN BE A VIRGIN FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. SO, I JUST ASKED MY CRUSH TO HAVE SEX WITH ME. BUT THEN, CONTRARY TO MY ORIGINAL PLAN OF JUST MAKING DO WITH THAT MEMORY, I ENDED UP IN A FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS SITUATION INSTEAD.

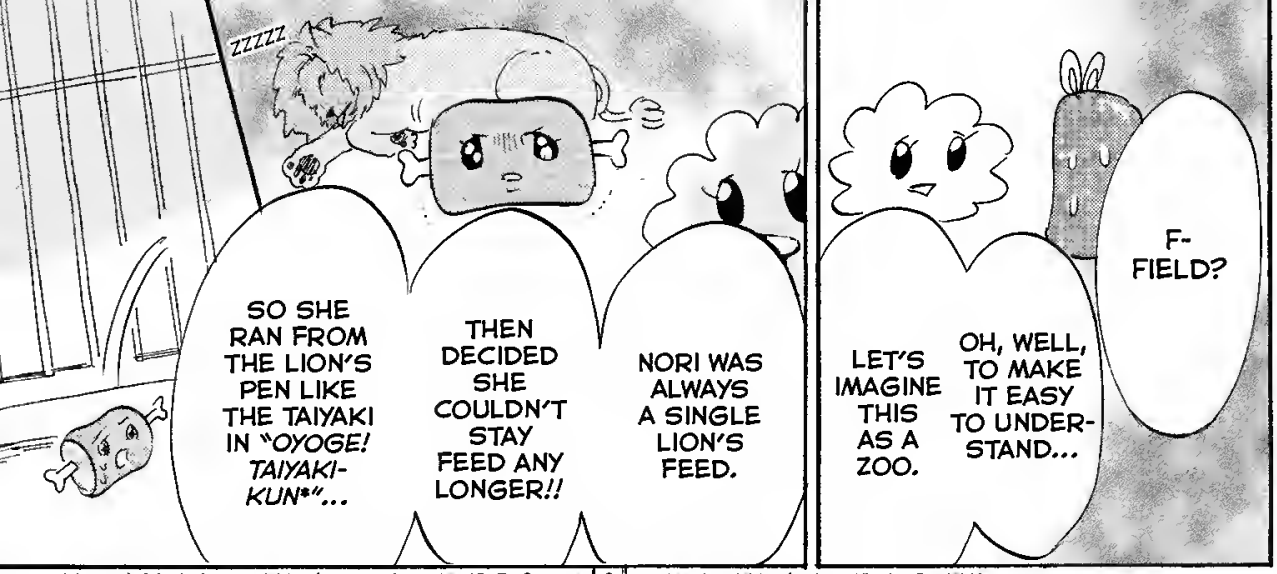
THEN, 8 YEARS PASSED. ONCE THAT RELATIONSHIP BECAME TOO MUCH TO BEAR, I DECIDED TO FIND A NEW LOVE. THEN, I FELL FOR A "MODEL IN HIS 30S" AND A "CUTE BOY 7 YEARS MY JUNIOR." BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ROMANCE BESIDES SEX, SO BEFORE I KNEW IT I WAS IN A PURELY PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THESE TWO WITH NO SIGNS OF ANY PROGRESS BEYOND THAT.

WHAT AM I DOING AT MY AGE? I'VE STARTED THINKING THAT IF I WAS JUST GOING TO BECOME A TOTAL EASY LAY, I SHOULD'VE JUST STAYED WITH MY LONG-TERM FRIEND WITH BENEFITS, SO I'M ON THE VERGE OF GOING BACK TO HIM. PLEASE GIVE ME SOME ADVICE.

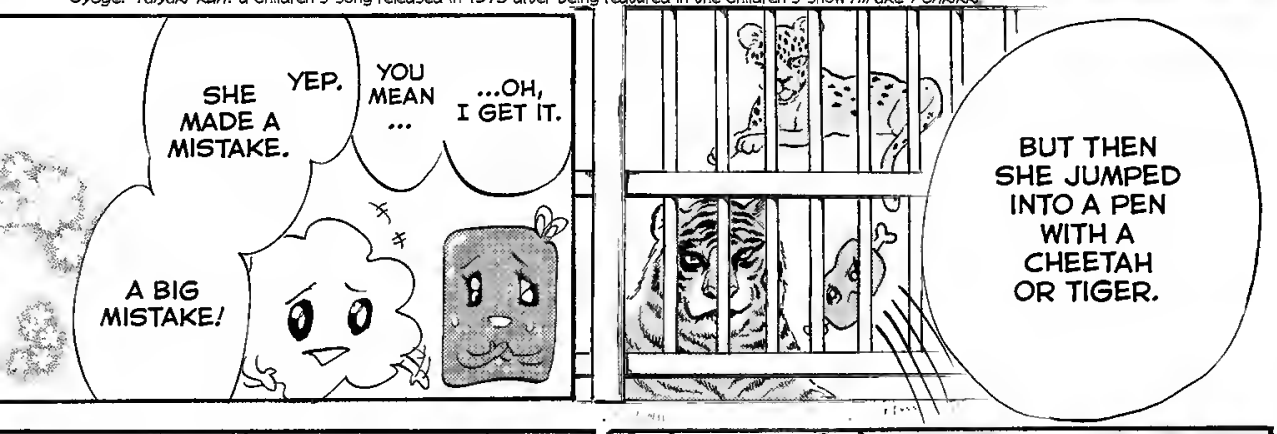


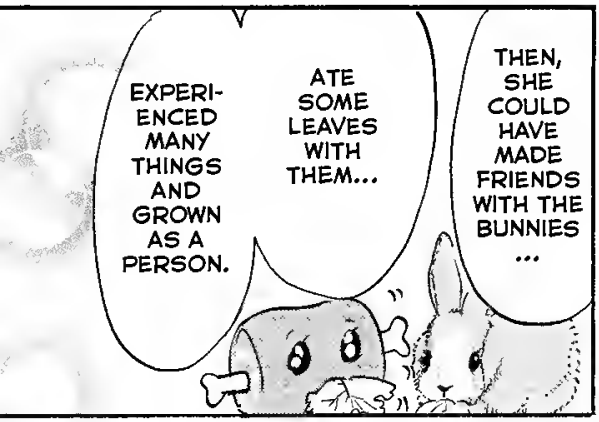
PN: NORI THE BEANPOLE (32)

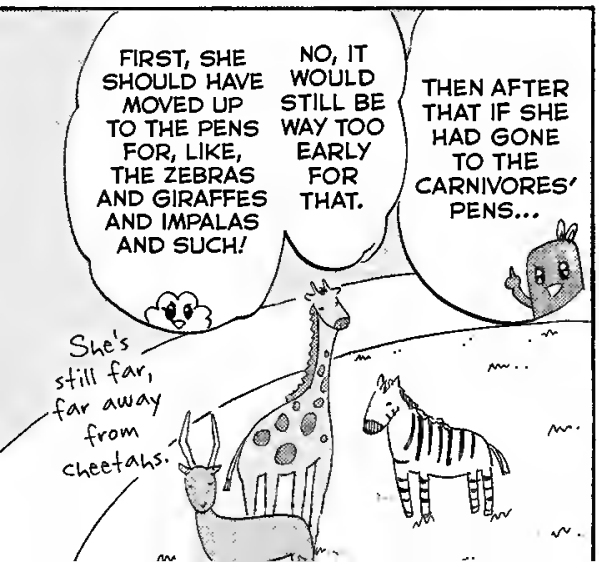
BUT, WELL, FIRST OFF... THIS GUY SHE'S BEEN SLEEPING WITH FOR 8 YEARS ...
THERE! QUESTION ANSWERED!
BEING POPULAR AND GETTING LAID AREN'T THE SAME!!
SHE'S NOT POPULAR! SHE IS NOT POPULAR!!
WHAP
OHHH! THAT WAS FAST!!
IN SOME WAYS, SHE ACTUALLY SOUNDS KIND OF POPULAR ...
WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS NORI THE BEANPOLE'S PROBLEM? WHAT IF? WHAT IF?
SO WHY ISN'T SHE HAPPY? WHAT IF? WHAT IF?
A pathetic two pager...
WE CAN'T LET KIDS READ THIS TARARE-BAR ANYMORE. WHAT IF. WHAT IF.
WHOA. THAT WAS TWICE AS HEAVY AS I WAS EXPECTING...
I'M AFRAID YOU MESSED UP A LITTLE HERE, NORI.
HUH?!
THIS "MODEL IN HIS 30S" AND THE "CUTE BOY SEVEN YEARS YOUR JUNIOR"...
SO NEXT...
I KNOW, RIGHT? EVEN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KID COULD TELL THAT HE'S A PIECE OF CRAP, RIGHT?
Yep!
LET'S DROP HIM LIKE A STONE, OKAY?
WHAP
YOU ENTERED THE WRONG FIELD.
IT'S JUST...
YEAH. LISTEN HERE, THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT, NORI. YOU WORKED MORE THAN HARD ENOUGH. GOOD GOING. SERIOUSLY.
MAYBE YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO BECOME THEIR GIRL-FRIEND, BUT JUST GETTING IN BED WITH THESE GUYS SHOWS YOU'VE GOT SOME MAJOR GIRL-POWER!! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
YOUR TARGETS WERE SUCH HIGH-QUALITY GUYS! THAT'S A BIG ACCOM-PLISHMENT!
THE FACT THAT WHEN YOU HIT THIRTY, SPROUTED A SENSE OF SELF, WANTED TO MAKE YOURSELF HAPPY, AND WORKED HARD, SO HARD TO GO AFTER THESE GUYS...

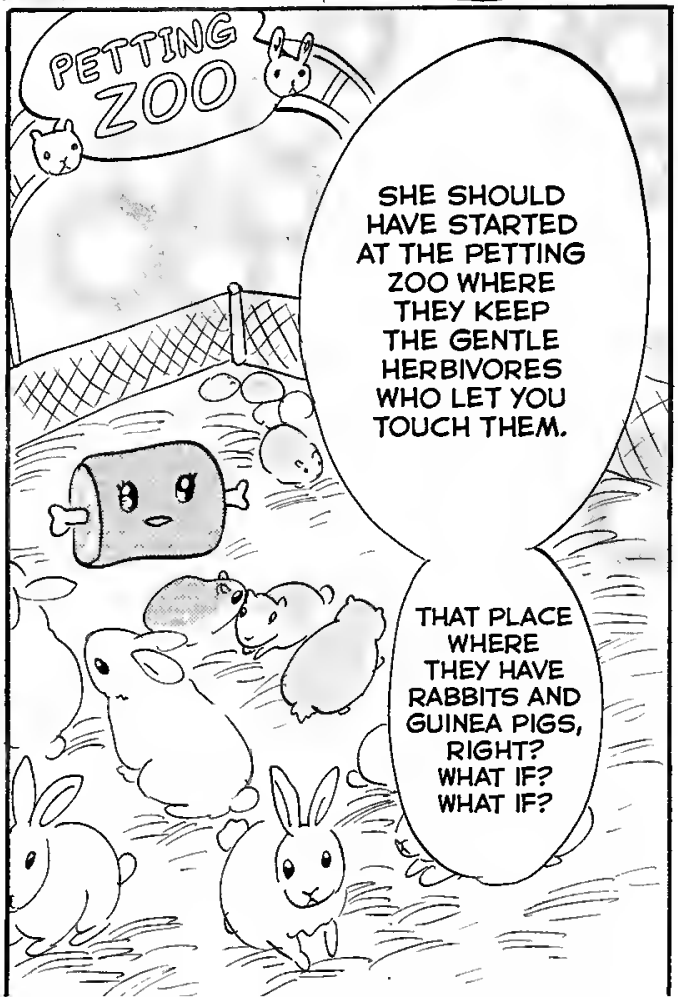

ZZZZZ
SO SHE RAN FROM THE LION'S PEN LIKE THE TAIYAKI IN "OYOGE! TAIYAKI-KUN*"...
THEN DECIDED SHE COULDN'T STAY FEED ANY LONGER!!
NORI WAS ALWAYS A SINGLE LION'S FEED.
F-FIELD?
OH, WELL, TO MAKE IT EASY TO UNDER-STAND...
LET'S IMAGINE THIS AS A ZOO.

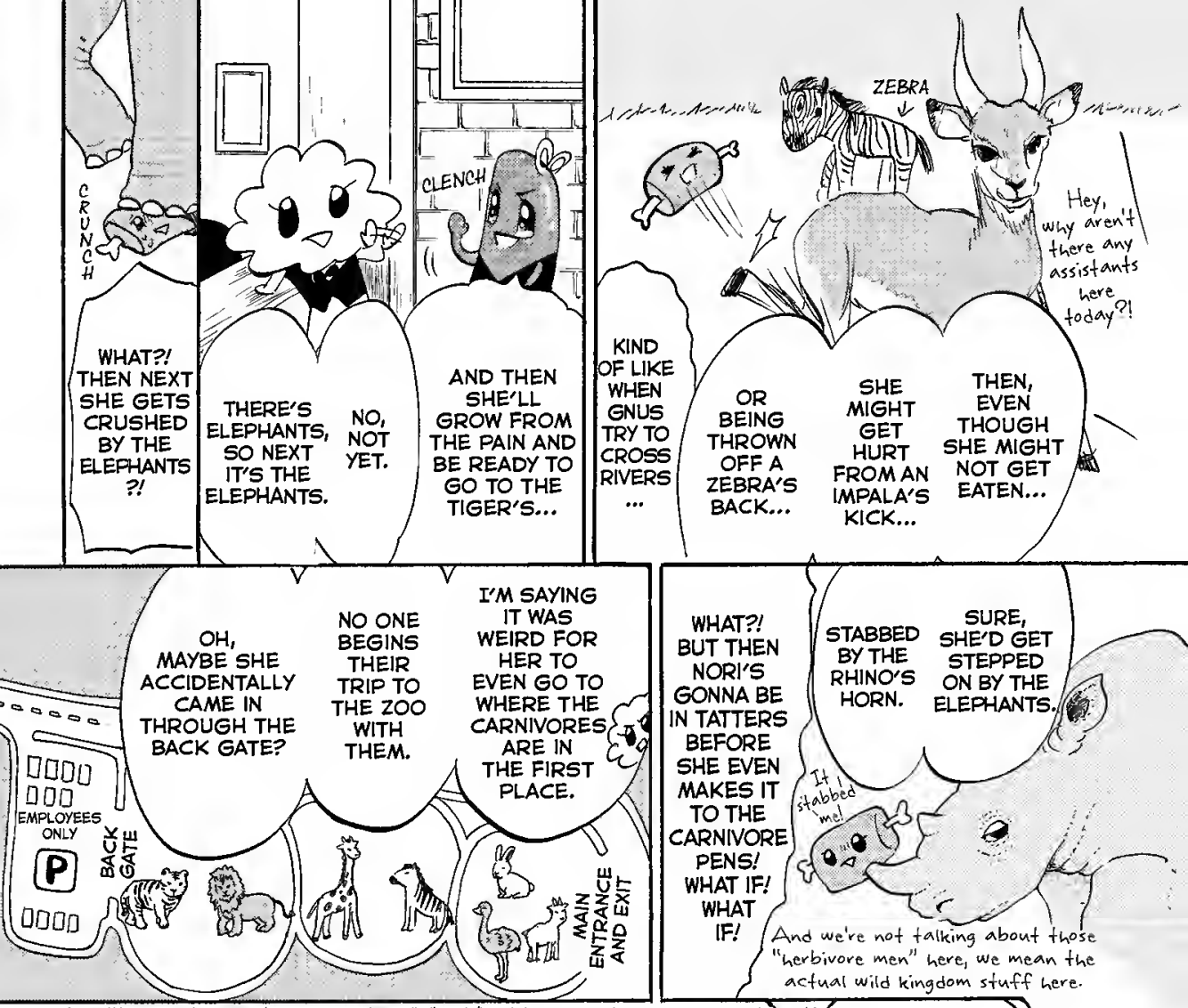
*Oyoge! Taiyaki-kun: a children's song released in 1975 after being featured in the children's show *Hirake Ponkikki*



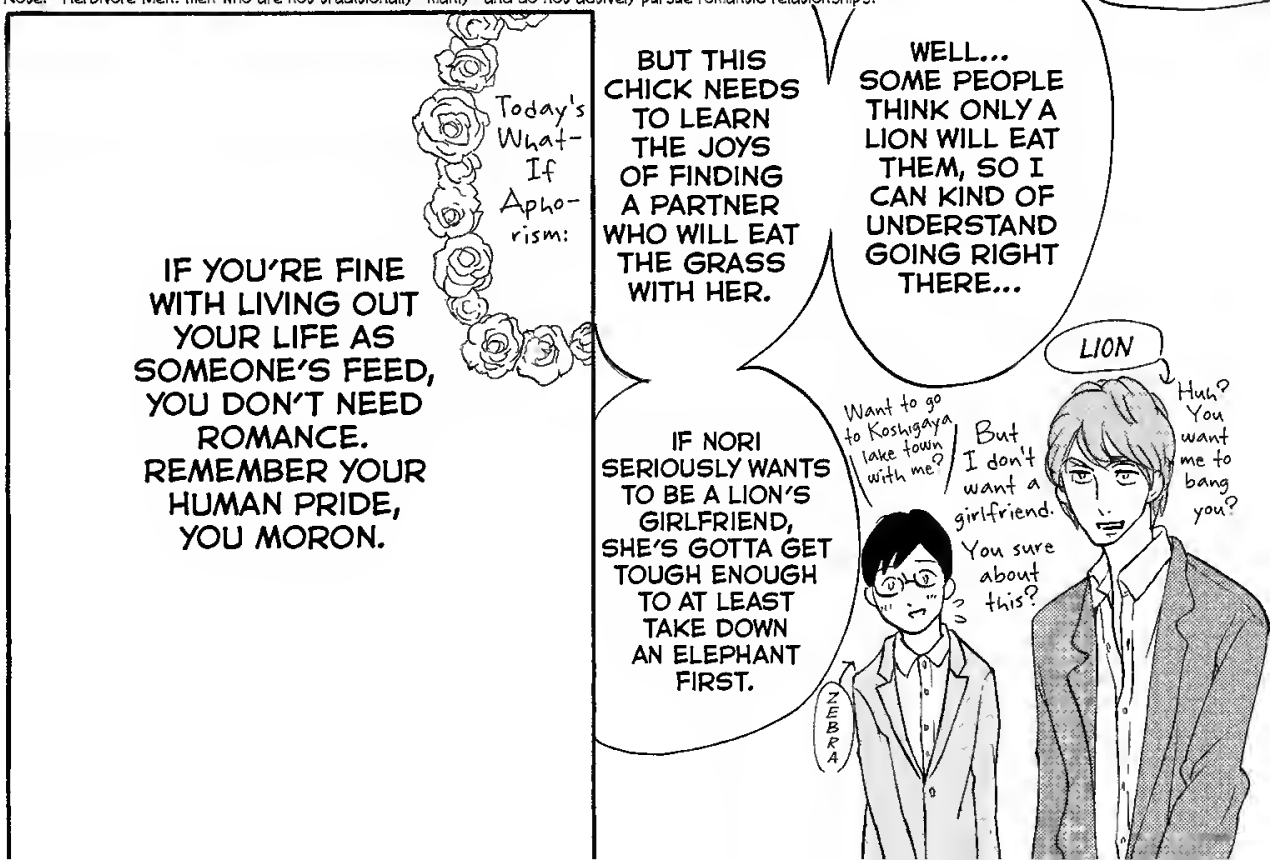

EXPERI-ENCED MANY THINGS AND GROWN AS A PERSON.
ATE SOME LEAVES WITH THEM...
THEN, SHE COULD HAVE MADE FRIENDS WITH THE BUNNIES ...

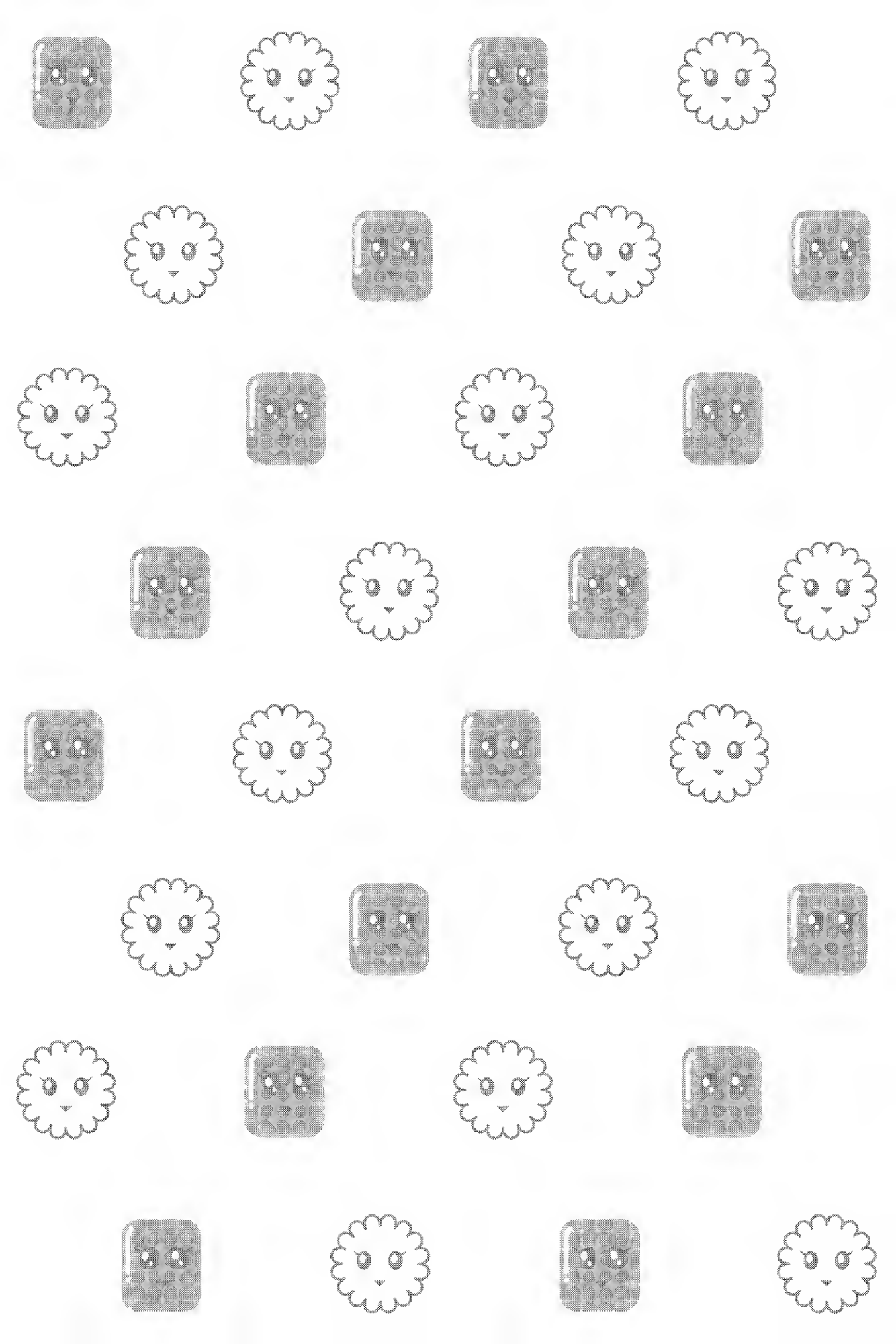

FIRST, SHE SHOULD HAVE MOVED UP TO THE PENS FOR, LIKE, THE ZEBRAS AND GIRAFFES AND IMPALAS AND SUCH!
NO, IT WOULD STILL BE WAY TOO EARLY FOR THAT.
THEN AFTER THAT IF SHE HAD GONE TO THE CARNIVORES' PENS...
She's still far, far away from cheetahs.

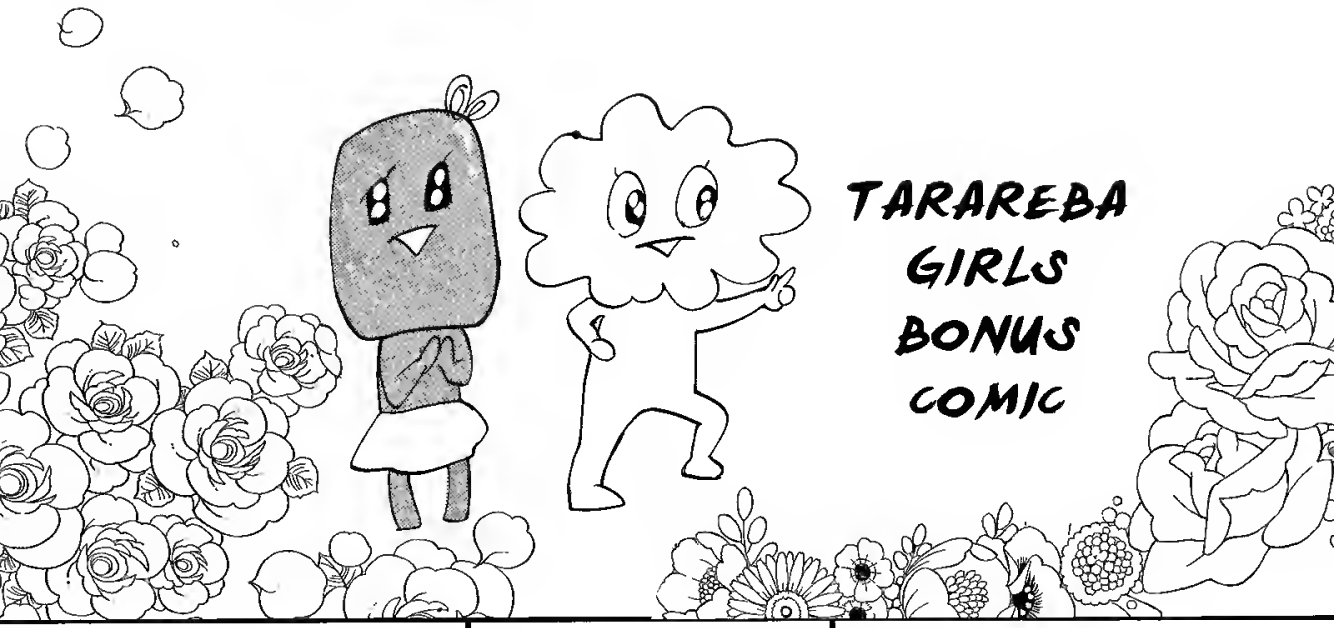

PETTING ZOO
SHE SHOULD HAVE STARTED AT THE PETTING ZOO WHERE THEY KEEP THE GENTLE HERBIVORES WHO LET YOU TOUCH THEM.
THAT PLACE WHERE THEY HAVE RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS, RIGHT? WHAT IF? WHAT IF?


CRUNCH
WHAT?! THEN NEXT SHE GETS CRUSHED BY THE ELEPHANTS?!
THERE'S ELEPHANTS, SO NEXT IT'S THE ELEPHANTS.
NO, NOT YET.
CLENCH
AND THEN SHE'LL GROW FROM THE PAIN AND BE READY TO GO TO THE TIGER'S...
ZEBRA
Hey, why aren't there any assistants here today?!
KIND OF LIKE WHEN GNUS TRY TO CROSS RIVERS...
OR BEING THROWN OFF A ZEBRA'S BACK...
SHE MIGHT GET HURT FROM AN IMPALA'S KICK...
THEN, EVEN THOUGH SHE MIGHT NOT GET EATEN...
EMPLOYEES ONLY
P
BACK GATE
OH, MAYBE SHE ACCIDENTALLY CAME IN THROUGH THE BACK GATE?
NO ONE BEGINS THEIR TRIP TO THE ZOO WITH THEM.
I'M SAYING IT WAS WEIRD FOR HER TO EVEN GO TO WHERE THE CARNIVORES ARE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
MAIN ENTRANCE AND EXIT
WHAT?! BUT THEN NORI'S GONNA BE IN TATTERS BEFORE SHE EVEN MAKES IT TO THE CARNIVORE PENS! WHAT IF! WHAT IF!
STABBED BY THE RHINO'S HORN.
SURE, SHE'D GET STEPPED ON BY THE ELEPHANTS.
It I stabbed me!
And we're not talking about those "herbivore men" here, we mean the actual wild kingdom stuff here.

Note: *Herbivore Men: men who are not traditionally "manly" and do not actively pursue romantic relationships.


Today's What-If Aphorism:
IF YOU'RE FINE WITH LIVING OUT YOUR LIFE AS SOMEONE'S FEED, YOU DON'T NEED ROMANCE. REMEMBER YOUR HUMAN PRIDE, YOU MORON.
BUT THIS CHICK NEEDS TO LEARN THE JOYS OF FINDING A PARTNER WHO WILL EAT THE GRASS WITH HER.
WELL... SOME PEOPLE THINK ONLY A LION WILL EAT THEM, SO I CAN KIND OF UNDERSTAND GOING RIGHT THERE...
IF NORI SERIOUSLY WANTS TO BE A LION'S GIRLFRIEND, SHE'S GOTTA GET TOUGH ENOUGH TO AT LEAST TAKE DOWN AN ELEPHANT FIRST.
ZEBRA
Want to go to Koshigaya lake town with me?
But I don't want a girlfriend.
You sure about this?
LION
Huh? You want me to bang you?





SO THIS YEAR IT'S BEEN 17? YEARS SINCE MY DEBUT? WELL, LET'S JUST SAY IT'S BEEN 17 YEARS. AND 17 IS A LOT, RIGHT? I MEAN, IN ONLY 3 MORE YEARS, IT WILL HAVE BEEN 20...

I THINK I WAS 23 WHEN I MADE MY DEBUT AS A MANGA ARTIST? IT WAS AROUND THE SAME TIME ARASHI MADE THEIR DEBUT IN HAWAII. SO I DEBUTED AT THE SAME TIME AS ARASHI.

BA-BA-BA-BA-BA-BAH

Banana? MEMORY

THANK YOU, EVERYONE, FOR PURCHASING TARAREBA VOLUME 5. THIS IS HIGASHIMURA SPEAKING. I KNOW THIS IS SUDDEN, BUT I'VE TURNED 40.

A haiku:

I wanted to stay...

Young forever and ever...

But still A to Z...

(Meaning I'm getting closer to Z.)

40 YEARS OLD

BOOM

17 YEARS

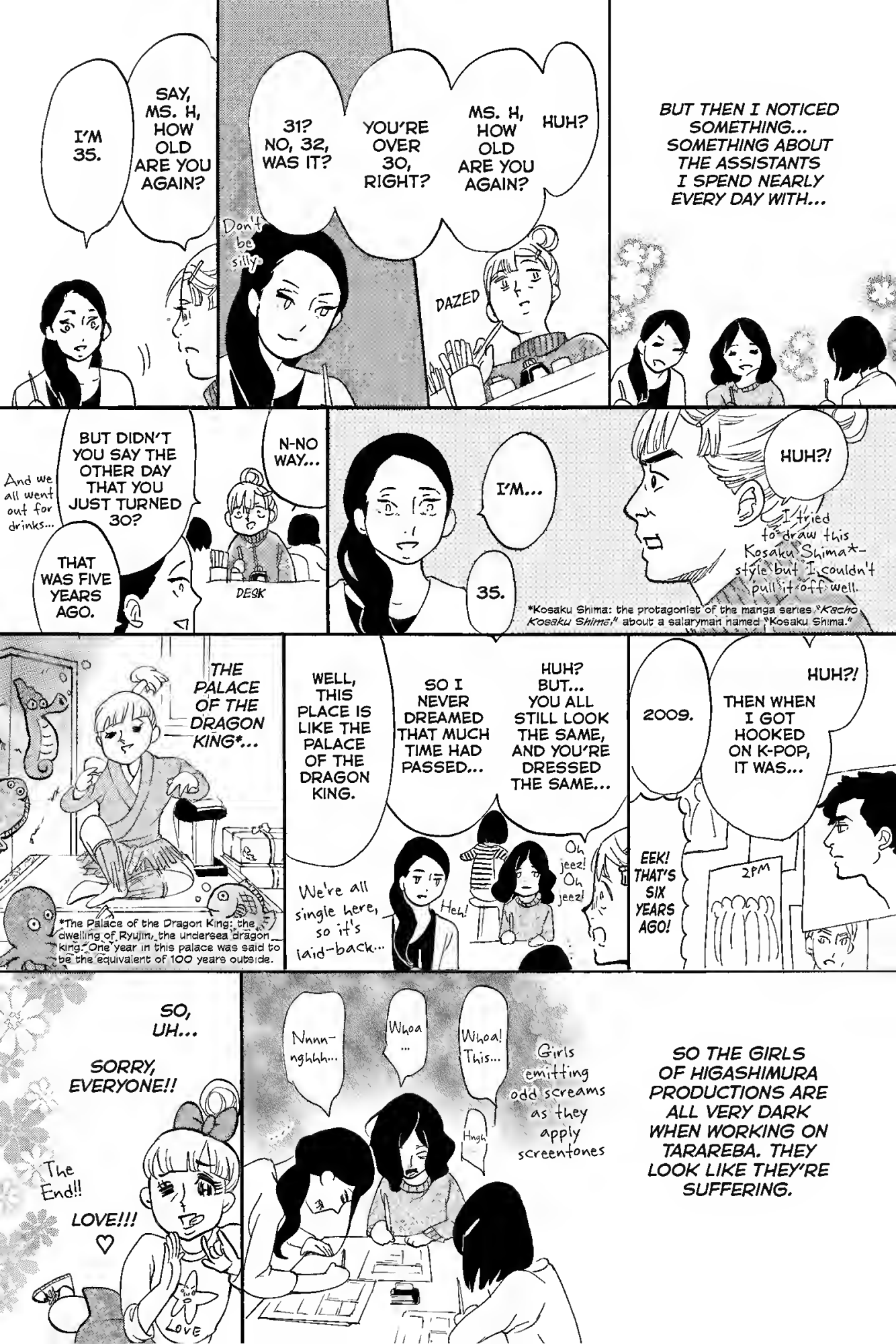
BOOM

I MEAN, IN MY MIND, I BECAME A MANGA ARTIST, WELL, OKAY, IT WAS A WHILE BACK. BUT NOT THAT FAR BACK, YOU KNOW? IT FEELS TO ME LIKE IT WAS MAYBE, I DON'T KNOW, 8 OR 9 YEARS AGO.

But I'm always in my workshop, so nothing really changes around me...

Well, sure, Gocchan keeps getting bigger and bigger...

THAT 17 YEARS PASSED... IN THE FRIGGIN' BLINK OF AN EYE.


SAY, MS. H, HOW OLD ARE YOU AGAIN?
I'M 35.
MS. H, HOW OLD ARE YOU AGAIN?
HUH?
YOU'RE OVER 30, RIGHT?
31? NO, 32, WAS IT?
Don't be silly.
DAZED
BUT THEN I NOTICED SOMETHING... SOMETHING ABOUT THE ASSISTANTS I SPEND NEARLY EVERY DAY WITH...
N-NO WAY...
BUT DIDN'T YOU SAY THE OTHER DAY THAT YOU JUST TURNED 30?
THAT WAS FIVE YEARS AGO.
And we all went out for drinks...
DESK
I'M...
35.
HUH?!
I tried to draw this Kosaku Shima-style but I couldn't pull it off well.
*Kosaku Shima: the protagonist of the manga series "Kacho Kosaku Shima," about a salaryman named "Kosaku Shima."
THE PALACE OF THE DRAGON KING*...
*The Palace of the Dragon King: the dwelling of Ryujin, the undersea dragon king. One year in this palace was said to be the equivalent of 100 years outside.
WELL, THIS PLACE IS LIKE THE PALACE OF THE DRAGON KING.
SO I NEVER DREAMED THAT MUCH TIME HAD PASSED...
HUH? BUT... YOU ALL STILL LOOK THE SAME, AND YOU'RE DRESSED THE SAME...
We're all single here, so it's laid-back...
Heh!
Oh jeez! Oh jeez!
2009.
HUH?!
THEN WHEN I GOT HOOKED ON K-POP, IT WAS...
EEK! THAT'S SIX YEARS AGO!
2PM
SO, UH...
SORRY, EVERYONE!!
The End!!
LOVE!!!
LOVE
Nnnn-nghhh...
Whoa...
Whoa! This...
Hngh
Girls emitting odd screams as they apply screentones
SO THE GIRLS OF HIGASHIMURA PRODUCTIONS ARE ALL VERY DARK WHEN WORKING ON TARAREBA. THEY LOOK LIKE THEY'RE SUFFERING.

Tokyo Tarareba Girls 5

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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